VIETNAM
THE AIR WAR

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Robert F Dorr

VIETNAM
THE AIR WAR

RESCUE

VIETNAM
THE AIR WAR

Robert F Dorr

OSPREY
AEROSPACE

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Title page Captain Steve Steven of the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron wanted to be either an artist or a fighter pilot. In fact, Steven, an active-duty colonel today, is a talented illustrator in his spare time. Capt Steven devised and painted the shark's teeth which appeared on 469th F-4E Phantoms when they deployed to Korat, Thailand, in October 1968 (*Steven*)

Front cover 'Gray Ghosts' loaded with bombs and headed for trouble. The Marines of VMFA-531 began arriving at Da Nang with their F-4B Phantom IIs in February 1965, at the start of the American build-up. They immediately noted that Air Force troops on the other side of the same airfield were living in air-conditioned French villas while the Marines occupied tents or slept beneath their aircraft. Without much in the way of luxury accommodations, VMFA-531's Marines were ready and able to protect their own ground forces who arrived in significant numbers in April and launched the first major American ground action soon thereafter (*Hanke*)

Back cover The 'Scooter' was one of the first Navy combat aircraft to see action in 'Nam and one was flown by the first American to be taken prisoner of war (POW), LTJG Everett Alavrez who flew with the 'Road Runners' of VA-144. Douglas A-4C Skyhawk 147779, seen at the end of a fighting day in June 1967, belongs to the 'Mighty Shrikes' of VA-94 and is depicted aboard USS *Hancock* (*Stokes Tomlin*)

Right The important thing, always, was to have the product ready for the customer. At Da Nang airfield in October 1967, Marine ordnance specialists of the A-6 Intruder-equipped VMA(AW)-242 'Bats' labour to assure prompt delivery. Armourers worked under very difficult circumstances, always knowing that their base could be mortared or overrun, while they struggled in the heat with ordnance like these Mark 82 500-lb (228-kg) bombs (*Thomas H Idema*)

Overleaf Welcome to sunny Saigon. Believe it or not, Pan Am really *did* have a billboard outside Tan Son Nhut exhorting tourists to visit. Hodgepodge of transports which supported the war, including the 'out country war,' is dominated by Douglas C-124C Globemaster II 51-0172 of the Military Air Transport Service, an aircraft near the end of its career and an organization soon to be re-named Military Airlift Command. Fairchild C-123B Provider in background was one of the first aircraft types to be camouflaged, while Herks remain pristine. 'Early days' scene is circa May 1966 (*Donald W Kilgus*)

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U.S. AIR FORCE
MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE

Introduction

War up north. Fighting around Hanoi. It's history now. It's detached from our lives by the passage of years. By the settling of smoke from embattled skies. And by those scratches and blemishes on personal snapshots dug out from attics, basements, footlockers, by warriors who do a better job of killing MiGs than preserving photography.

Difficult as it seems for many of us to remember, fully a quarter of a century has passed since the first heavy fighting around Hanoi. Americans and North Vietnamese fought in those skies through a series of campaigns, many of which seem a little hazy to us now, looking back from such a distance.

There was the Rolling Thunder effort against North Vietnam from 1965 to 1968. This was a period of intense air-to-air fighting, of missile activity, of MiG kills. Afterward came the 'bombing halt' up north, from 1968 to 1972—punctuated by intense action in South Vietnam and Laos, and some fighting in North Vietnam. A new phase came with the Linebacker campaigns in 1972, when the heaviest fighting took place up north and the first Americans became air aces. And a final phase came between the end of the American role in fighting in 1973 and the evacuation of Saigon in 1975.

Any errors are the fault of the author. But this volume would not have been possible without the assistance of many. I'm obligated to express my thanks to some of them.

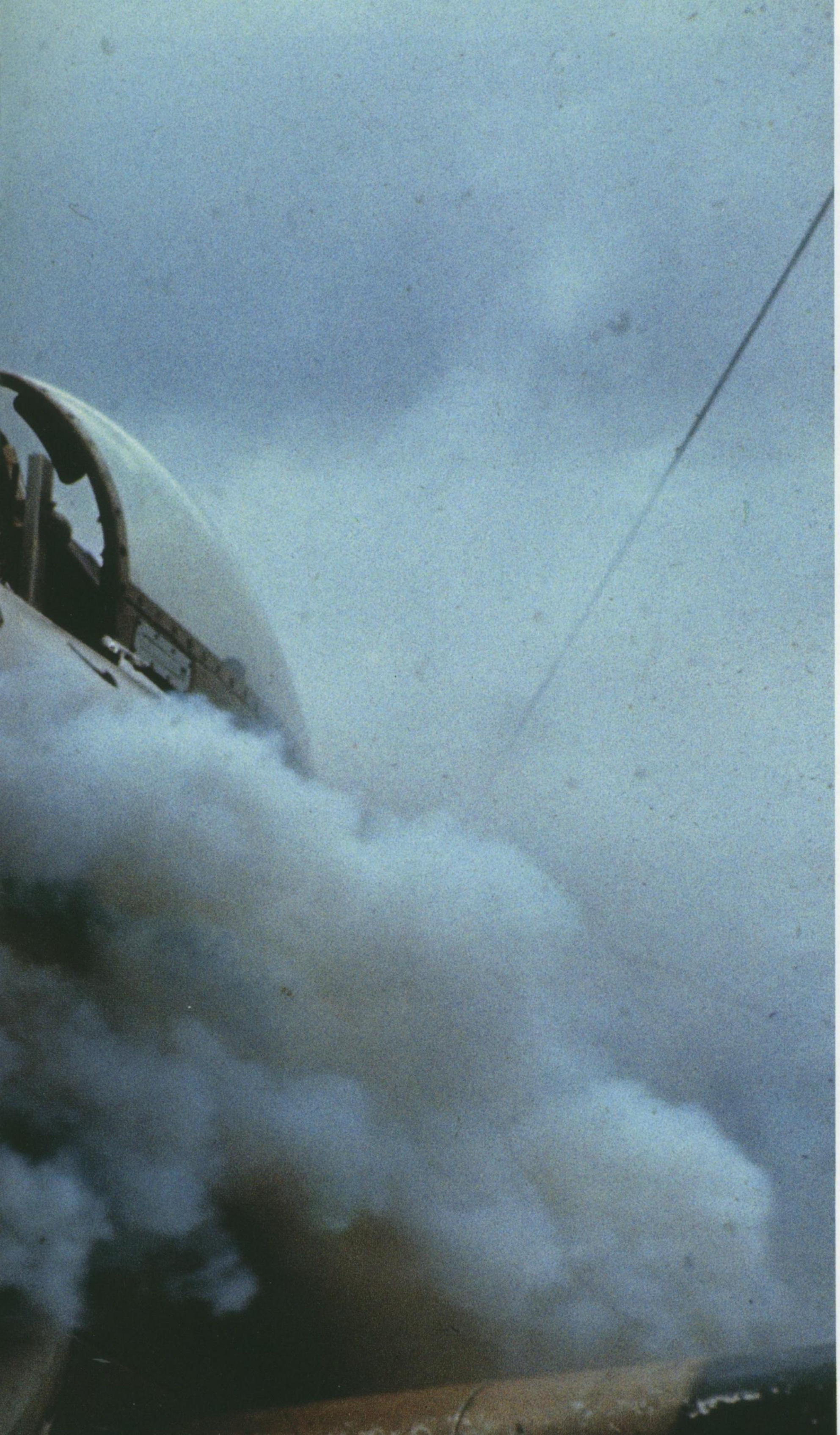
Among those who fly and fight: J C Black (A-1 Skyraider), John D Cummings (F-4), James Doolittle 3rd (A-1), Cort Durocher (A-37), Thomas H Idema (A-6), Donald W Kilgus (F-100), Ron Lord (F-8), Jim McBride (A-7), Vince McCarthy (F-4), Ed Renth (HH-43), Steve Steven (F-4), and Stokes Tomlin (O-1).

Among the fraternity: Steve Daniels, Larry Davis, Robert C Greby, Joseph G Handelman, Marty J Isham, David W Menard, Peter Mersky, R J Mills, Jr, the gang at Roy's, Douglas E Slowiak, Norman Taylor, and Nick Williams.

I am also grateful to Dennis Baldry and Tony Holmes for their support and encouragement. The colour glimpses which follow, it is to be hoped, will provide a few fresh insights on the Vietnam war, especially the 'out-country war' fought near Hanoi. Let us hope that we learn from what we know of the conflict and use the knowledge well in the future.

Robert F Dorr
Oakton, Virginia 1991

538
Gomer
Getter



Spads

Gomer Getter, an A-1H Skyraider of the 1st Special Operations Squadron at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand shows the wearing of its camouflage and the coughing of smoke which are so much a part of the story of this great aeroplane. The Skyraider belched smoke, but it could also carry just about any ordnance and could survive heavy hits from enemy ground fire (*James Doolittle 3rd*)

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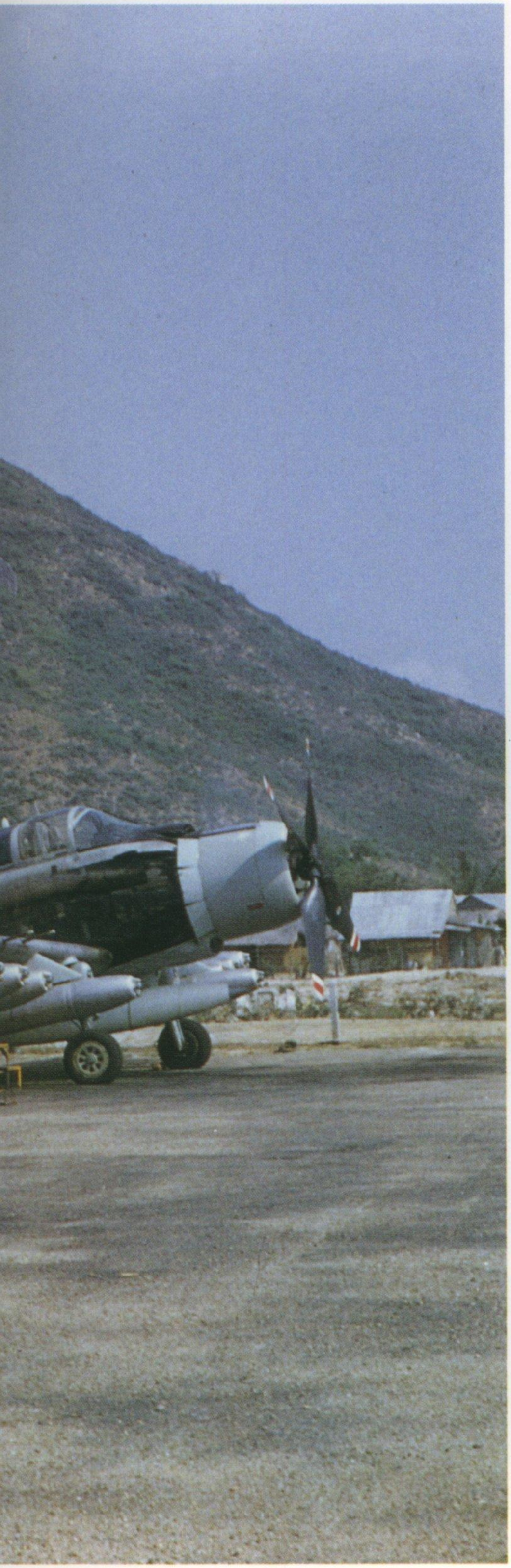
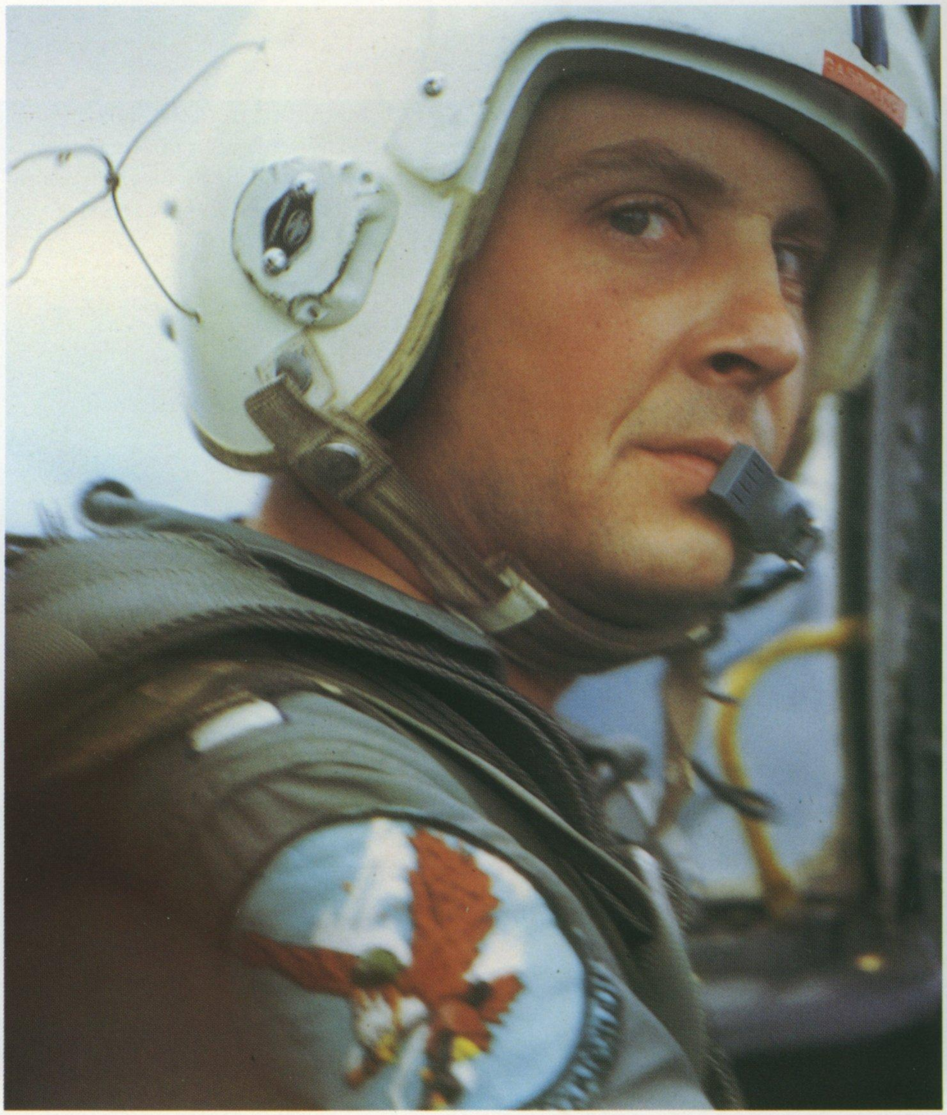
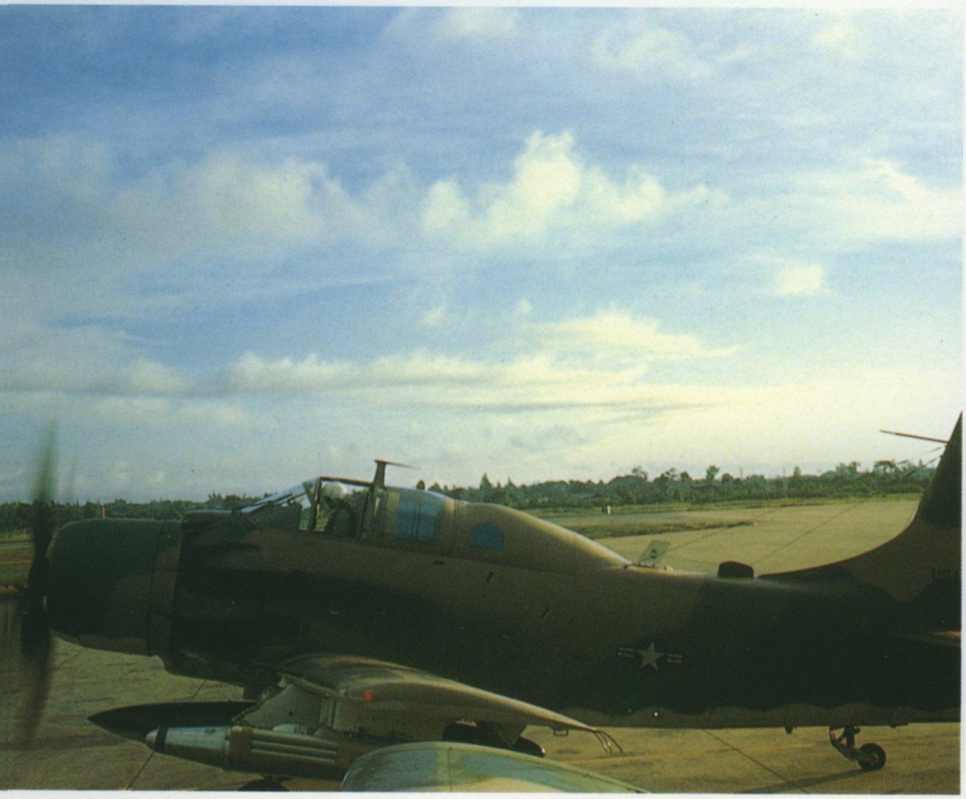




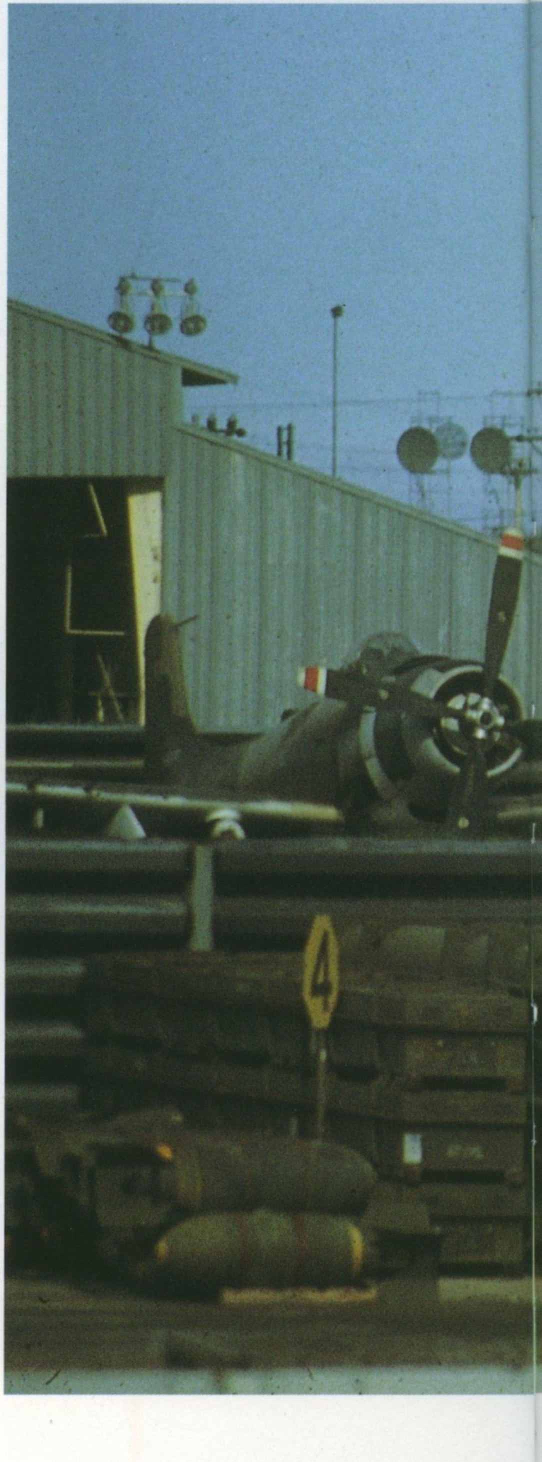
Above Captain Hubert G King Jr was an A-1E Skyraider pilot with the 602nd Fighter Squadron (Air Commando) and was on the wing of Major Bernard Fisher during the battle for A Shau—where Fisher landed under heavy fire to rescue another downed Skyraider pilot. King flew numerous missions into North Vietnam at the controls of the venerable 'Spad' (*King*)

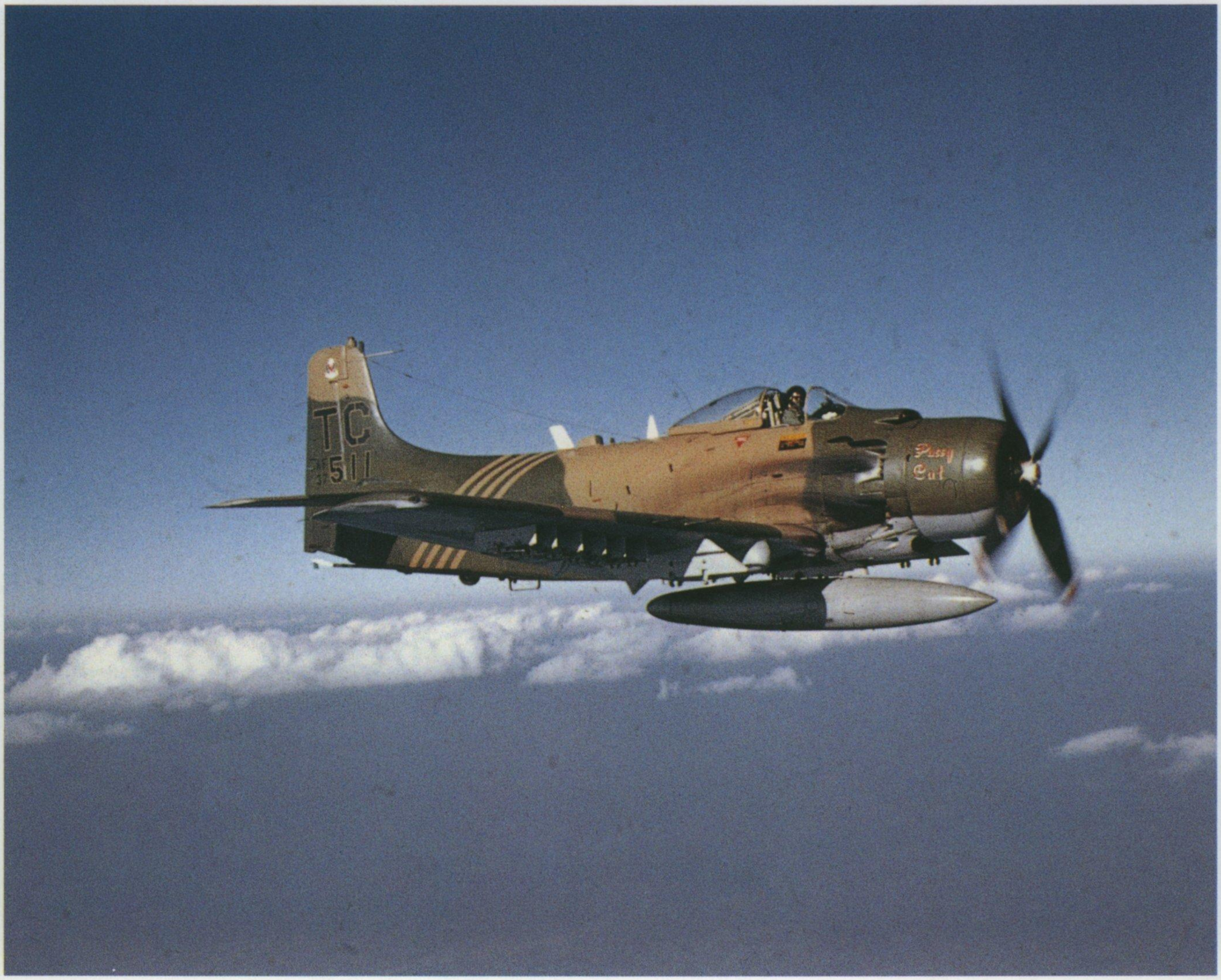
Left Ship 132412 is one of a pair of A-1E Skyraiders belonging to the Qui Nhon detachment of the 602nd Fighter Squadron in April 1966. Ship in foreground is laden with napalm. 'Spads' flew both south and north and had the endurance to remain over target for long periods, taking and receiving punishment (*via Robert F Dorr*)

Below A-1G Skyraider Bureau No 132401 (distinguished from the similar A-1E by the shape of its rear cockpit) belonging to the US Air Force's 602nd Fighter Squadron warms up at Qui Nhon in September 1966. The 'Spad' flew thousands of missions up north and especially endeared itself for 'Sandy' rescue sorties deep in enemy territory (*via Robert F Dorr*)



Right Typical view of an airbase in South Vietnam in 1967, this being Tan Son Nhut airfield outside Saigon. Aircraft are in partial revetments for protection from mortar attack. The odds and ends needed to make an aerial campaign effective are strewn all over the airfield. Bombs are kept everywhere. A 'fat face' A-1E Skyraider faces away from the camera, a single-seat A-1H toward us (*Nick Williams*)





Above *Pussy Cat* is A-1H Skyraider 137511, belonging to the 1st Special Operations Squadron and droning through Laotian skies near Nakhon Phanom, Thailand (*via Robert F Dorr*)

Right Flying low in front of karst, or limestone cliffs, typical of portions of Laos and North Vietnam, A-1H Skyraider 134494 belongs to the 1st Special Operations Squadron, stationed at Nakhon Phanom airbase in Thailand. This was the location of many of the 'Sandy' Skyraiders which covered combat rescues in North Vietnam (*James Doolittle 3rd*)

49

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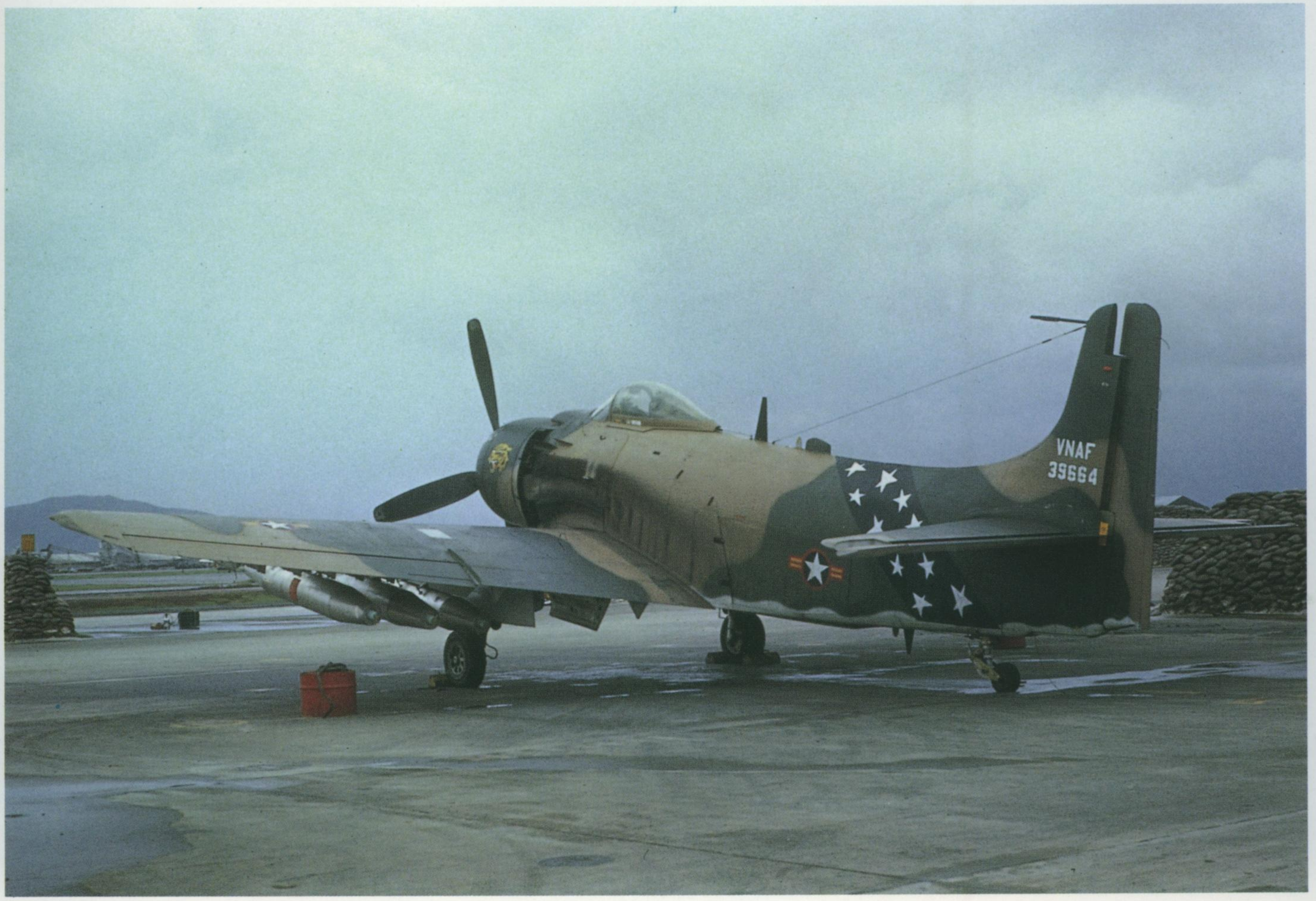
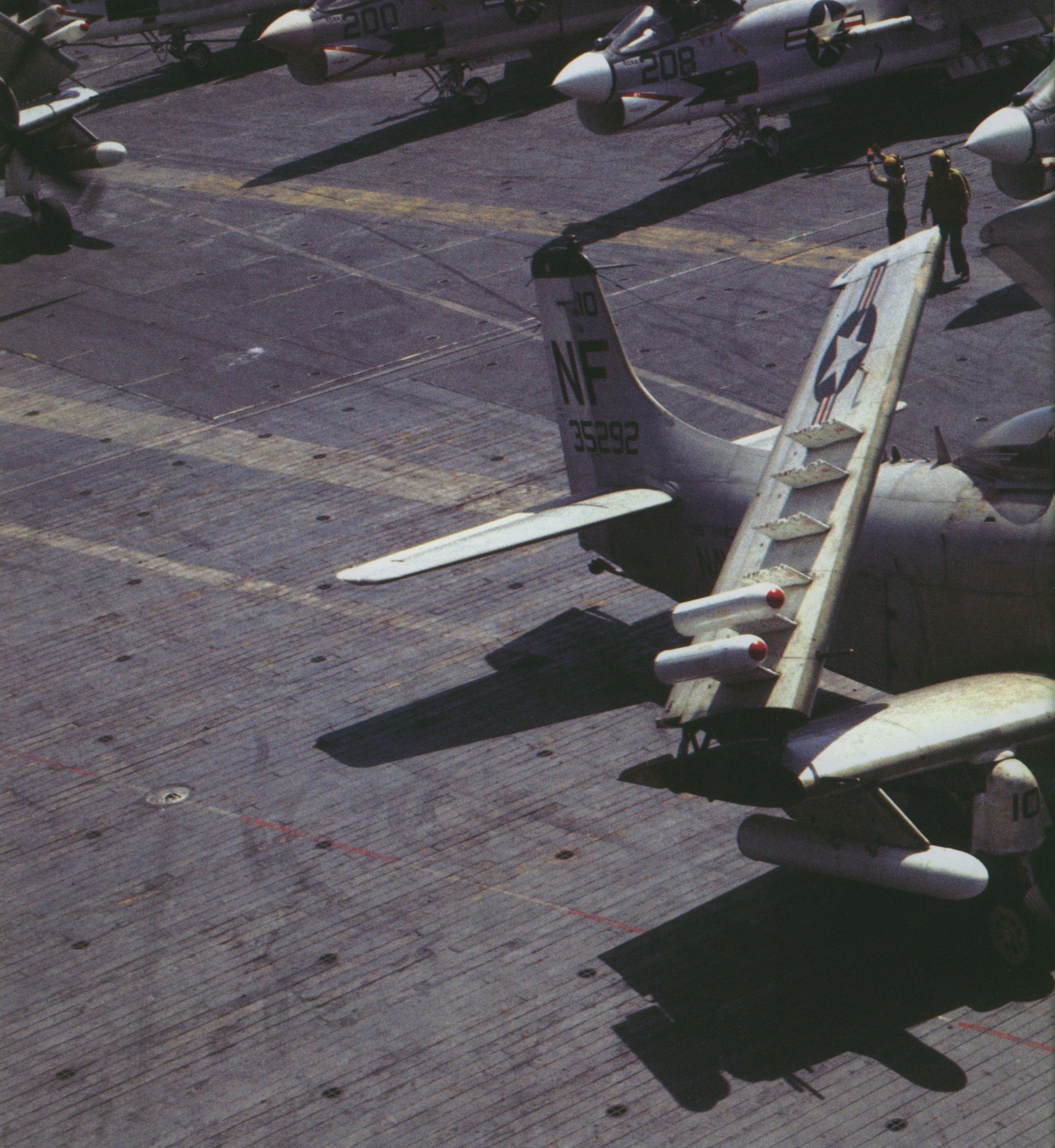
139602



Left In February 1965 at the start of Operation Rolling Thunder, Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky went into North Vietnam leading a flight of A-1H Skyraiders similar to these. The Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) eventually had half a dozen Skyraider squadrons, including the 514th at Bien Hoa which operated these ships (Bureau No 139602, in foreground) (*via Robert F Dorr*)

Above A Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) A-1H Skyraider, Bureau No 139664, of the 516th Fighter Squadron, part of the VNAF's 41st Wing stationed at Da Nang and is seen in February 1967 (*Paul Stevens*)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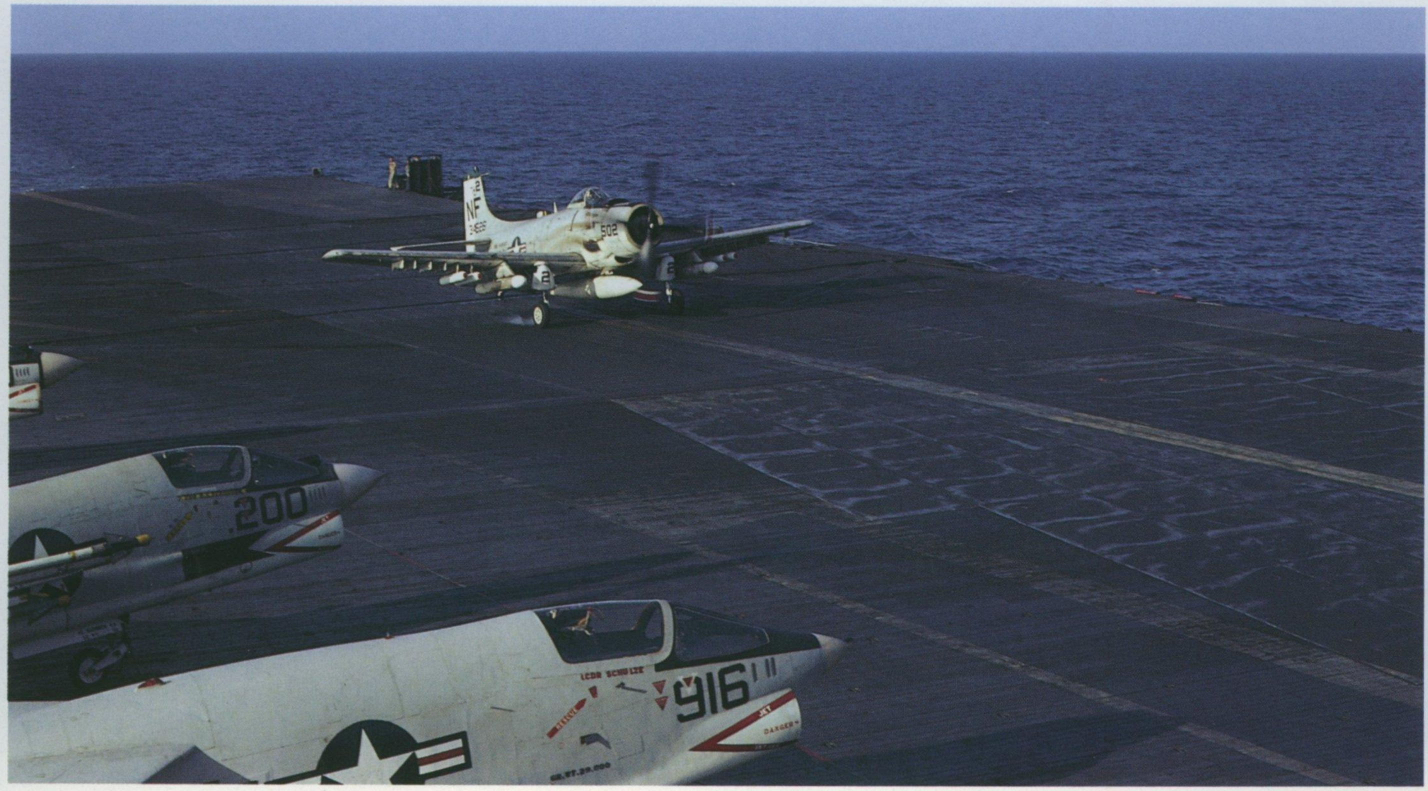


Preceding pages The Crusaders in the background will kill eighteen MiGs before the war is over, but the Spad in the foreground will attack ground targets with everything including the kitchen sink. Douglas A-1H Skyraider 135292 of the 'Arabs' of VA-115 taxies on USS *Hancock*'s deck in June 1967. Spad carries a centreline fuel tank and six canisters for 2.75-inch air-to-ground rockets (*Stokes Tomlin*)

Above Another view of a Skyraider on the USS *Hancock*. The piston-engined A-1 flew in combat from carrier decks until late 1967 when replaced by the A-6 Intruder (*Stokes Tomlin*)

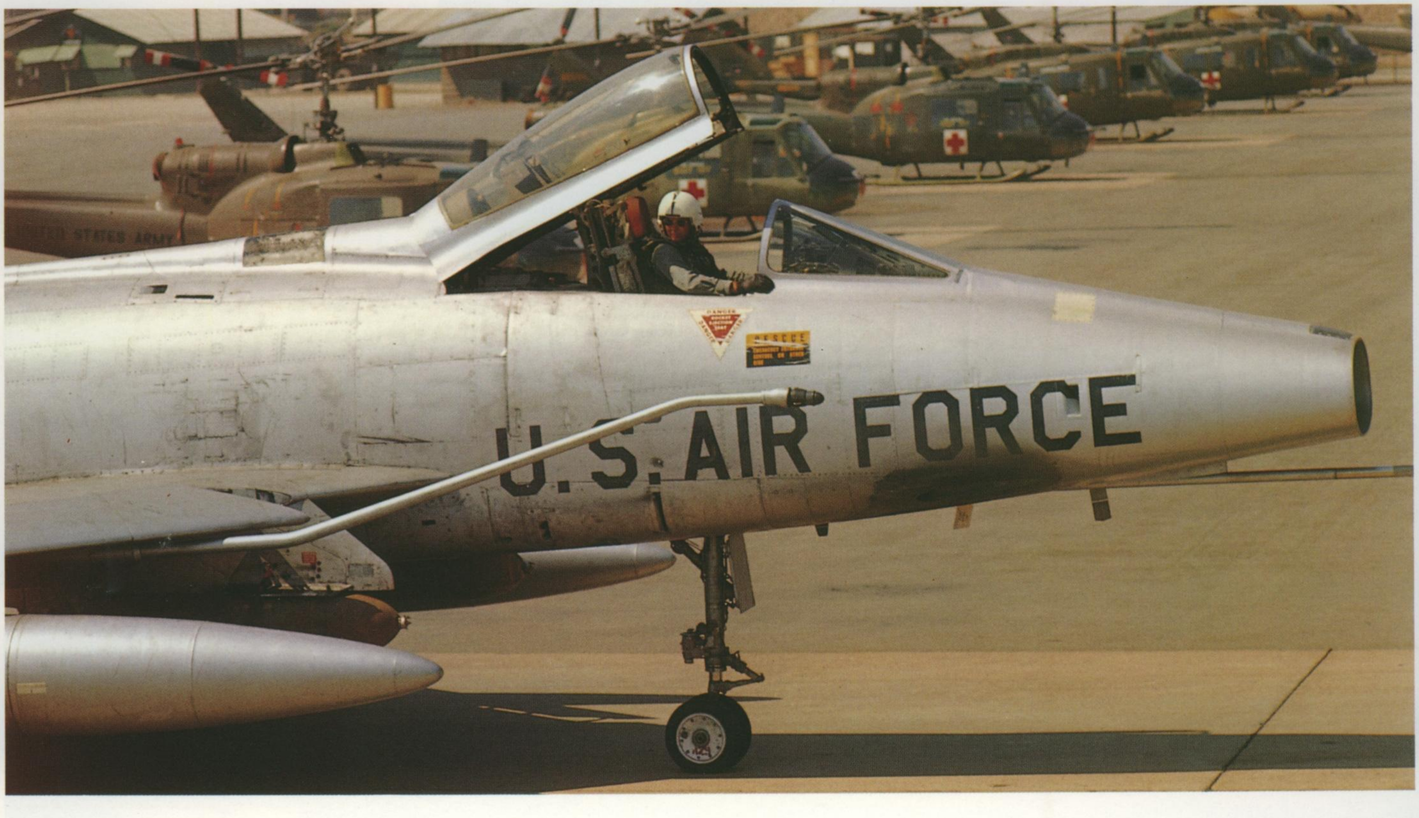
Right Navy/Air Force teamwork. Early in the conflict, Navy A-1 Skyraiders flew protective escort for HU-16B amphibians orbiting on station over the Gulf of Tonkin, awaiting the call to rescue downed US airmen. In this June 1965 view, the escort ship is Douglas A-1J Skyraider 142078 of the 'Barn Owls' of VA-215, operating from USS *Hancock* (CVA-19). Grumman HU-16B Albatross 51-0071 subsequently was destroyed by North Vietnamese mortar fire during an attempted offshore rescue on 14 March 1966 (*J C Black*)

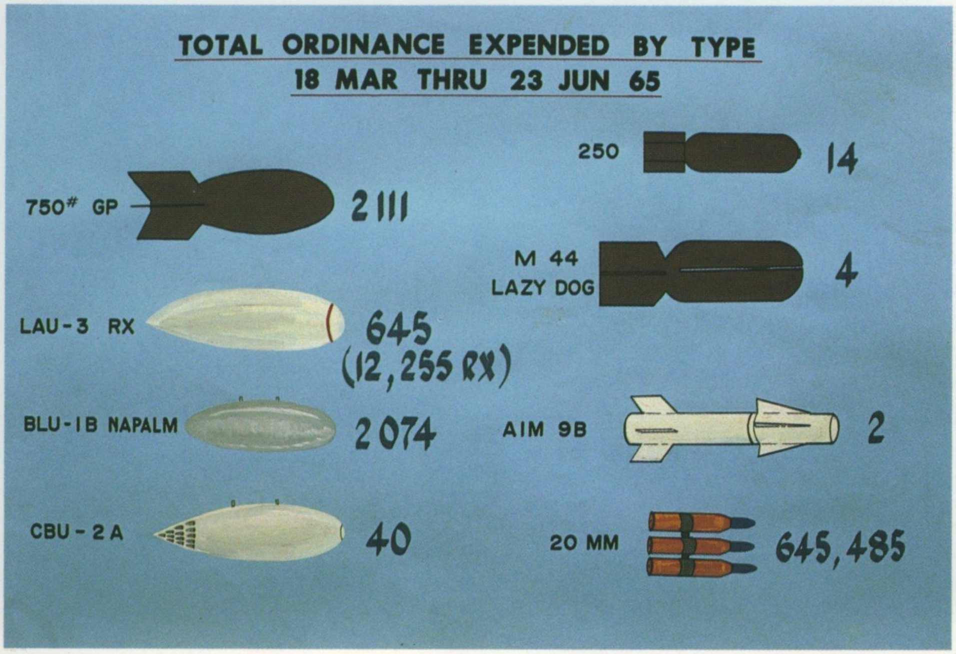
RESCUE
0-10071
U.S. AIR FORCE
NP
42078
62
NAVY
VA-215

Huns

Left At Bien Hoa airbase in 1966, Don Kilgus's wide-angle captures the hard work that goes into preparing an uncamouflaged North American F-100D Super Sabre for a mission. These men are working around the installation for the four M39 20-mm cannon while the 'Hun's' flight refuelling probe is very much in evidence, poking up from the starboard wing. After getting a 'probable' MiG-17 kill on 4 April 1965, the pilot who took this picture fought onward in the F-100, and later in the F-105 Thunderchief (*Donald W Kilgus*)

Below Kilgus taxies out from Bien Hoa in a bomb-laden F-100D with 'Dust-Off,' or medical evacuation, UH-1B and UH-1H Huey helicopters sporting red crosses in the background. When strikes up north began, the F-100 was the only ship available to fly MiGCAP in Hanoi's troubling environs. For most of the war, though, the Super Sabre fought in the south—flying more combat sorties, in all, than any other type of the war (*Donald W Kilgus*)





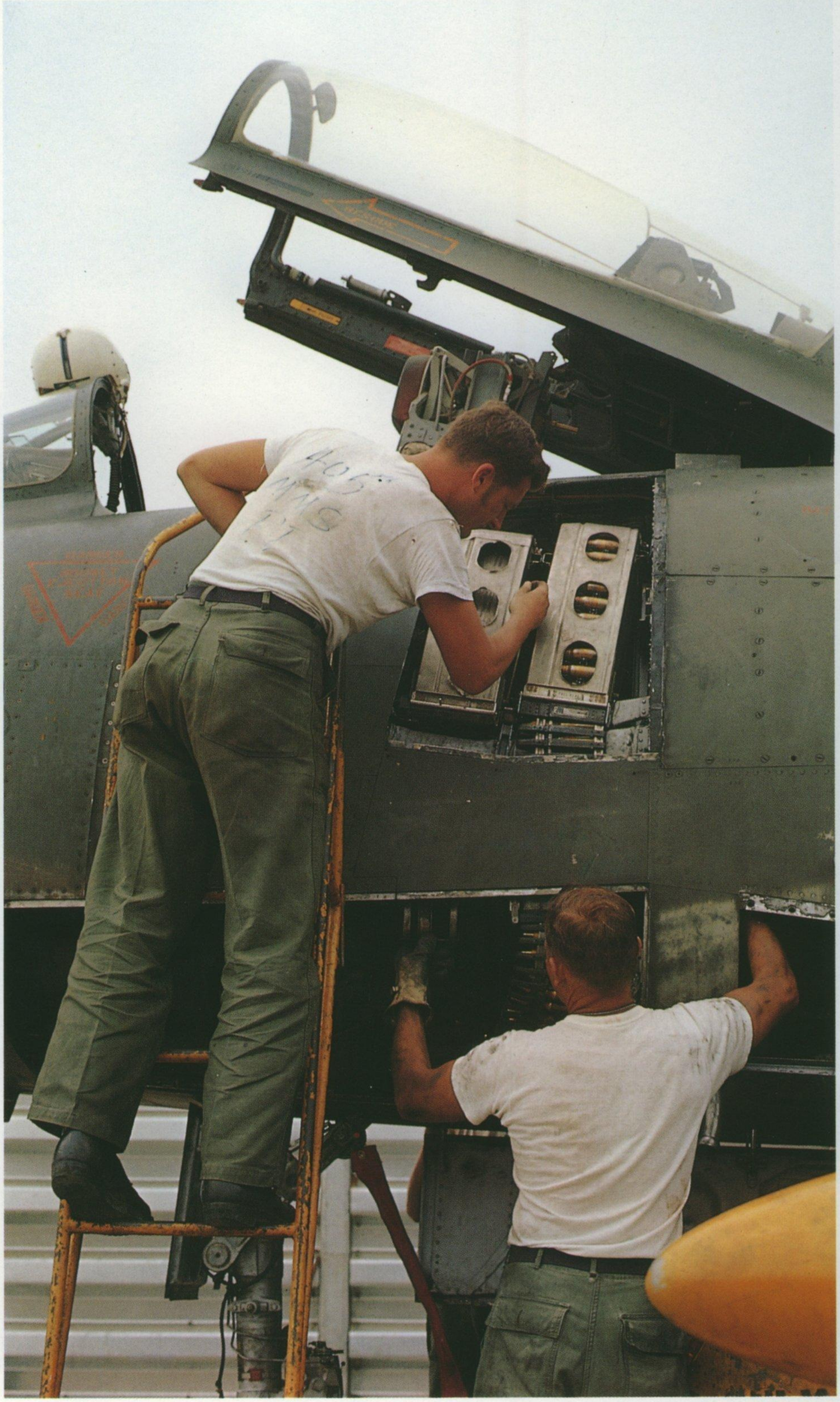
Left A chart on the wall at Operations for the 416th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Bien Hoa, South Vietnam in July 1965 shows the kinds of ordnance (the word is spelled wrong on the chart) expended in the early days of the American build-up, when the squadron's F-100D Super Sabres were operating over North Vietnam (*Donald W Kilgus*)

CAPT. KILGUS
C/C A1C M. SANTIAGO
DANGER ROCKET EJECTION SEAT
ARMAMENT
AIR FORCE

Right The arrival of camouflage, beginning in late 1965 and early 1966, changed the colour of the North American F-100D Super Sabre but not much else. The four 20-mm cannons were not easy to work on, the fighter having been designed before ease of maintenance enjoyed a high priority in Air Force planning. Pilot's helmet shown was an old-style chapeau, even in 1966 (*Donald W Kilgus*)

Overleaf North American F-100D Super Sabre 55-3595 of the 416th Tactical Fighter Squadron as it looked early in the Vietnam camouflage period (around June 1966) when natural metal was no longer the order of the day but tailcodes had not yet appeared on the vertical fin (*Donald W Kilgus*)

Left Captain Donald W Kilgus, at the controls of *Kay Lynn* (the nickname is painted forward on the nose and is not seen here), alias F-100D 55-2894, the ship in which he scored a 'probable' kill of a MiG-17 on 4 April 1965. Aircraft belongs to the 'Silver Knights,' the 416th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Bien Hoa, South Vietnam (*Donald W Kilgus*)



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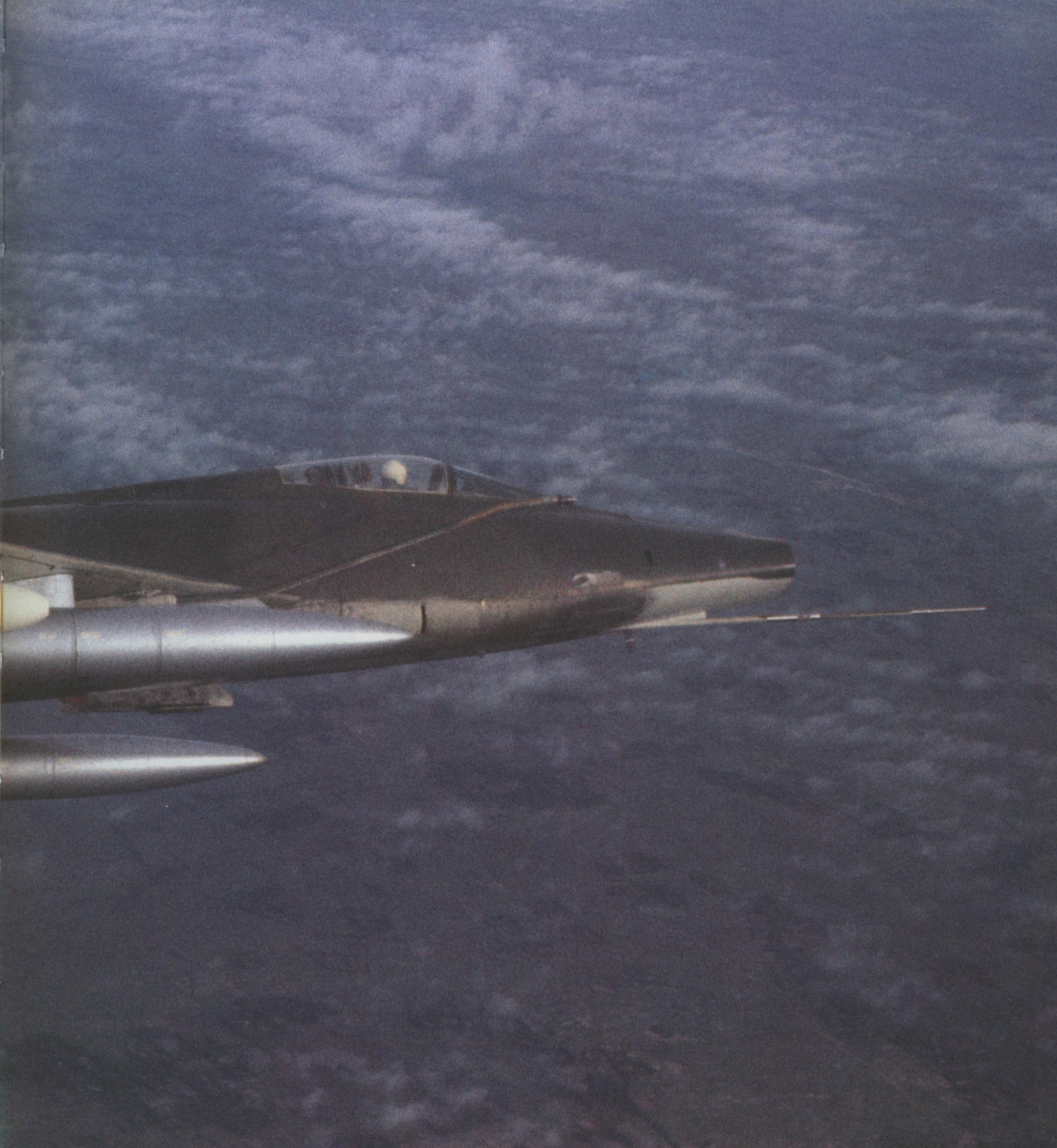
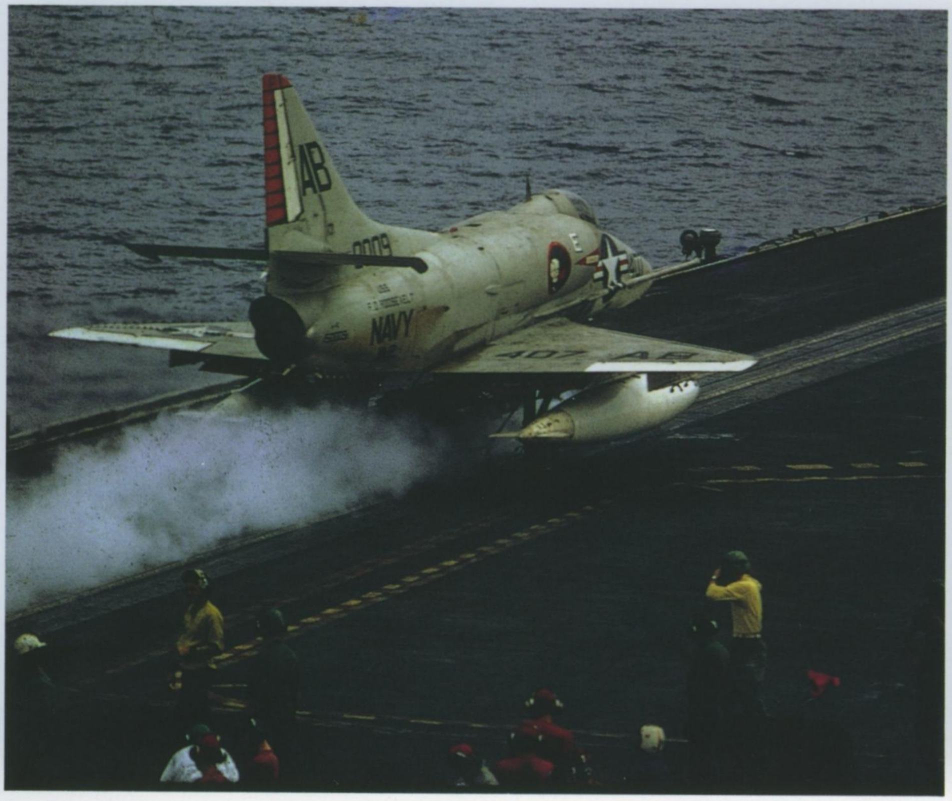


Scooters

Right Douglas A-4C Skyhawk of the 'Flying Ubangis' of VA-12 ready to launch from the USS *Shangri-la* (CVS-38) in 1970. All Navy carriers had angled decks and steam catapults by the time of the aerial campaigns against North Vietnam, but *Shang* still had her 8-inch wooden deck from World War 2, which was harder on the aircraft and made the surface of the carrier deck feel quite different from newer vessels (*Jim McBride*)

Below VA-12 'Ubangis' A-4C Skyhawk 150009 laden with bombs launches against North Vietnam from the deck of USS *Franklin D Roosevelt* (CVA-42) on a moody day in December 1966. The launch from a carrier's huge steam catapult is the most powerful single force exerted on a naval aviator in flight, but it inflicts no harm and passes as quickly as the flicker of an eyelash (*Vince McCarthy*)



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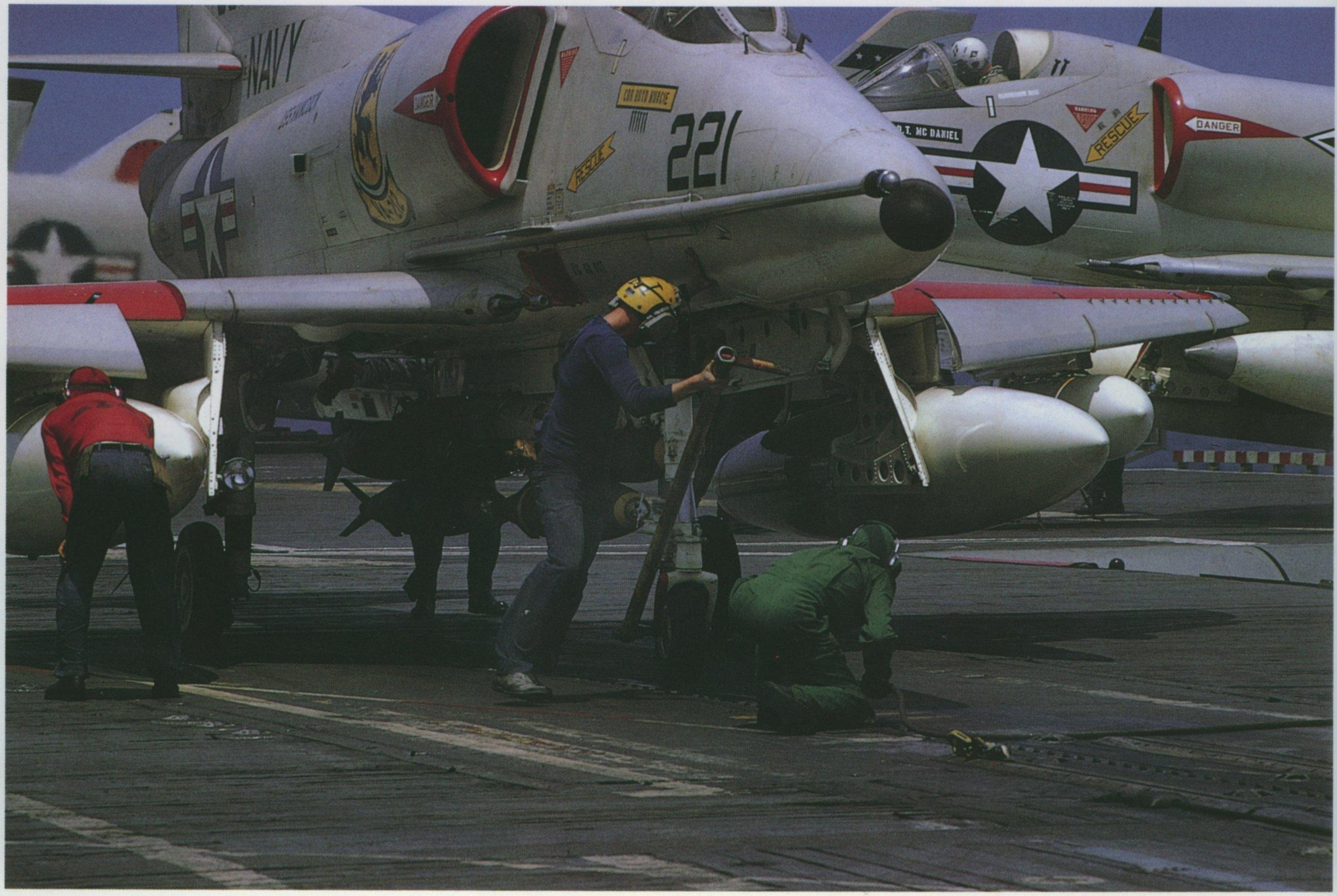
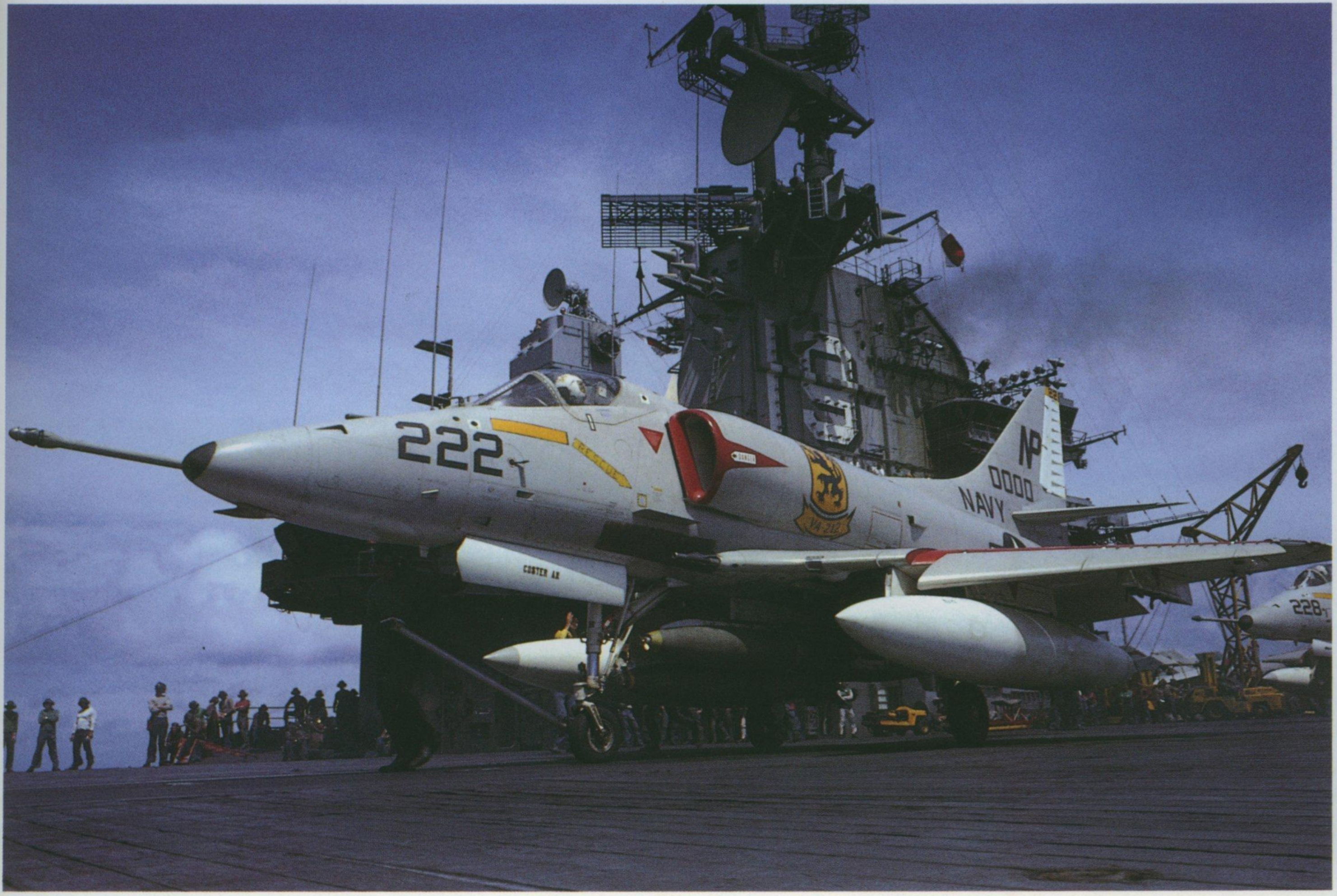

NAVY
221
RESCUE
DANGER
LT. MC DANIEL

Skyhawk of VA-212 being attended by blueshirts aboard USS *Hancock* (CVA-19). The 'Scooter' was supposed to be replaced by the A-7 Corsair II, but A-4s continued to serve in the combat zone from the earliest days of the conflict until the evacuation of Saigon in 1975 (*Merrill Worthington*)


222
RESCUE
NP
0000
NAVY
VA-212
228

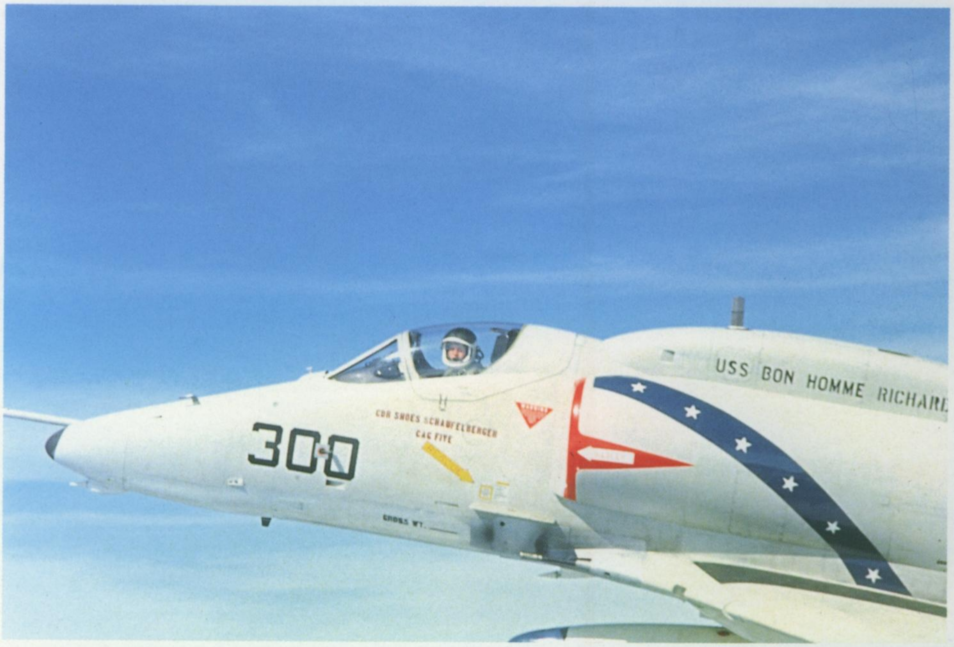
The interesting thing about this Skyhawk is its bureau number, 150000, of which the last four digits are visible on the tail. NP-222 belonging to squadron VA-212 was lost in combat over North Vietnam shortly after this 1965 view taken aboard *Hancock* (*Merrill Worthington*)

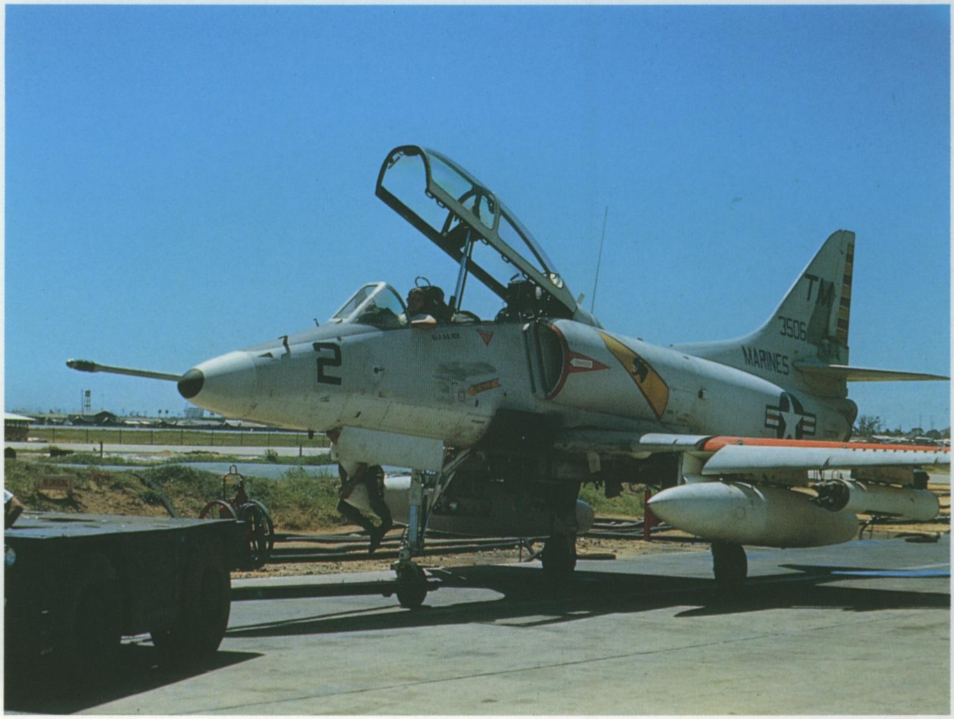
AJ
VA 12
9553
NAVY
401

Left VA-12 'Flying Ubangis' Douglas A-4C Skyhawk 149553 banks over Navy warships during a combat mission in 1970 (*Jim McBride*)

Right No, that's not 'Shoes' Schaufelberger, CAG on *Bonnie Dick*, though it's CAG's Scooter, all right. Wearing a non-regulation pressure suit which was his trademark, the pilot is LCDR Dennis Cargill, who went on to reach flag rank. The aircraft is A-4F Skyhawk 154980 of the 'Fighting Redcocks' of VA-22, flying a combat mission from USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA-31) in 1969 (*Dennis Cargill*)

Below right The Marine Corps employed the sleek TA-4F Skyhawk two-seater as a Fast FAC (forward air control) observation ship, in Laos as well as South and North Vietnam. 153506 wears unusual H&HMS markings and is seen at Chu Lai in about 1967 carrying a load of Zuni air-to-ground rockets at the outboard weapons stations (*Thomas H Idema*)





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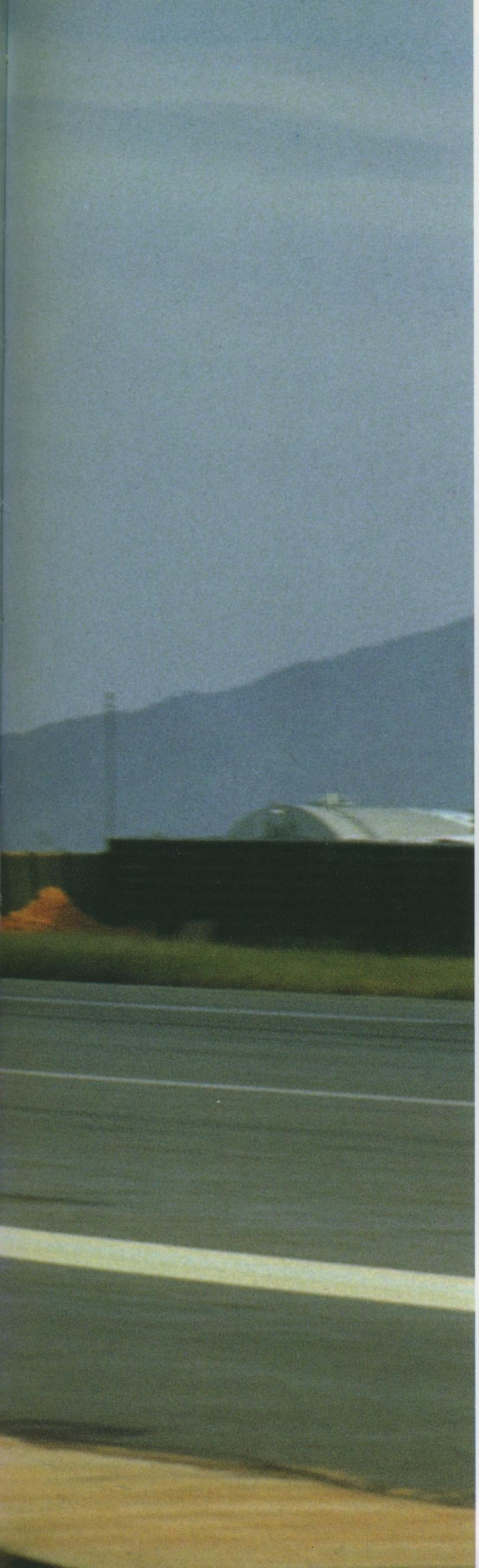
155625
VMA-AW-533
MARINES

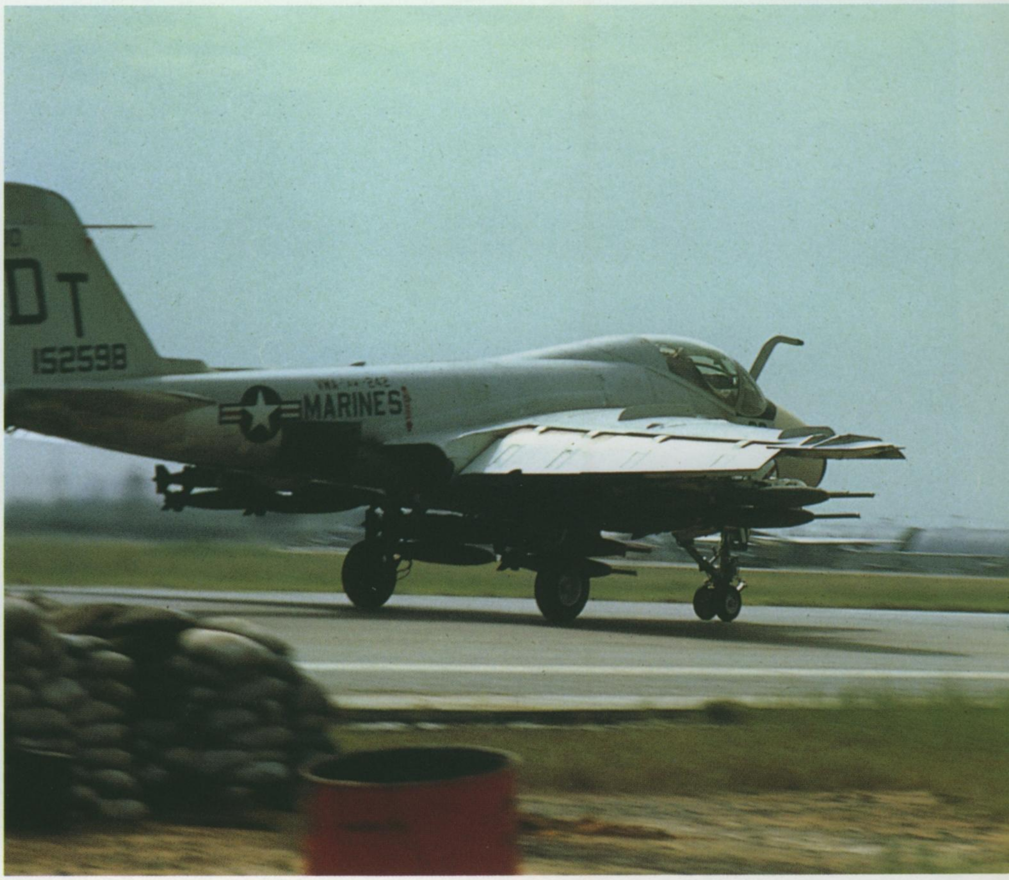
Intruders

Intruder at launch in the Gulf of Tonkin: twenty years after this picture was taken, A-6E crews were once again writing up their missions in green ink during the 1991 war against Iraq (*USN via R J Mills, Jr*)

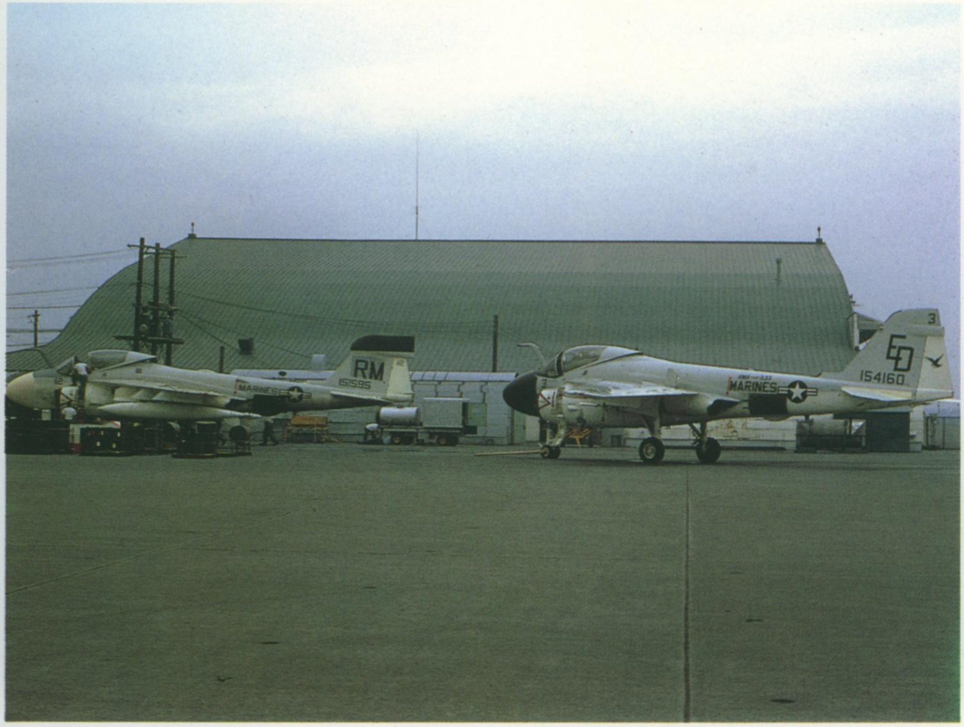
DT

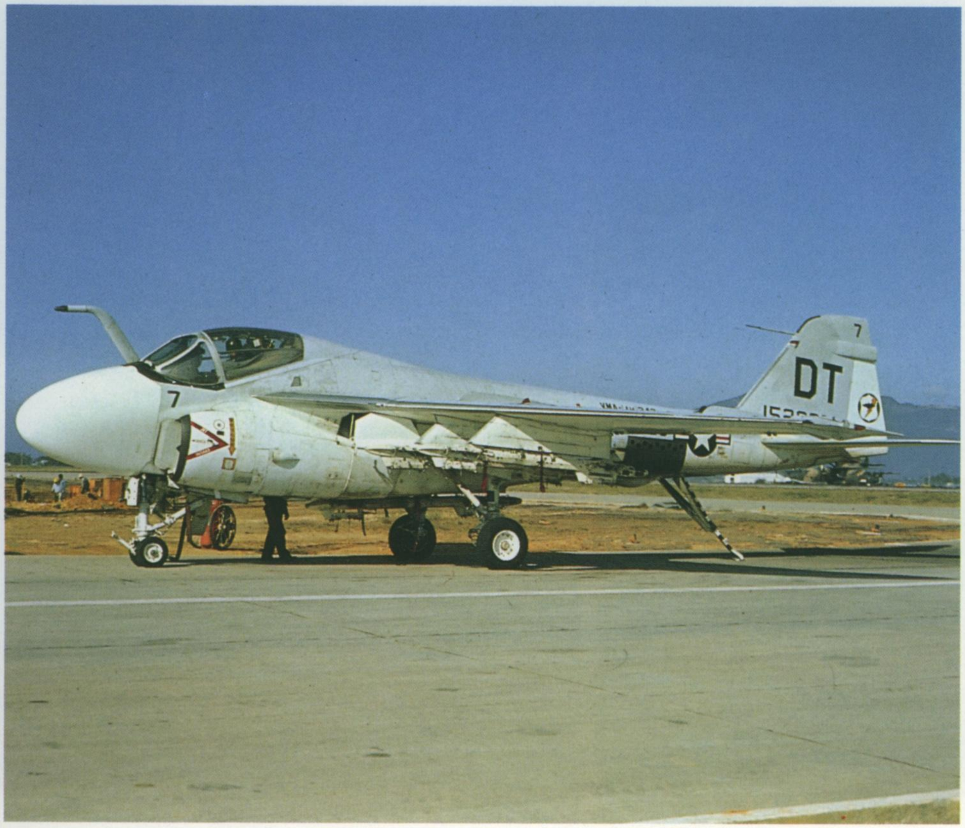


Left Grumman A-6A Intruder of the Da Nang-based VMA(AW)-242 'Bats' taking off from Da Nang on a combat mission in November 1968 with very weathered radome and three-foot (0.92-m) 'daisy cutter' impact fuses on its Mark 82 500-lb (228-kg) bombs. Marine Intruders flew combat missions in both North and South Vietnam (*Thomas H Idema*)



Above Although Marine fliers stay in training for carrier operations, all Marine Corps A-6A Intruders during the Vietnam conflict were mounted from land. This Intruder from VMA(AW-242) is departing from Da Nang on a combat mission in 1968 (*Thomas H Idema*)



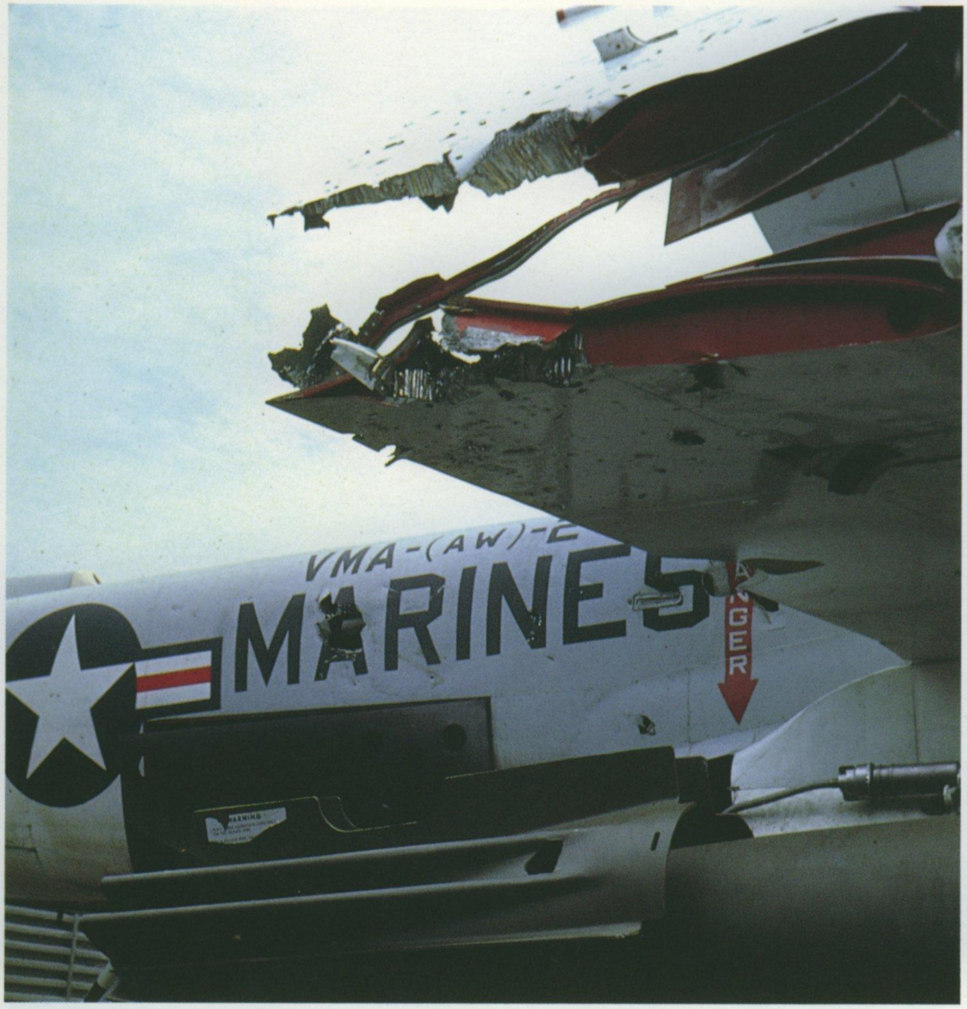


Above left Navy and Marine Corps attack aircraft received electronic warfare support from EA-6A Electric Intruders, one of which, Bureau No 151595/coded RM-12 of VMCJ-1, is parked on the left of a standard A-6A Intruder at NAS Atsugi, Japan in 1968 (*Nicholas M Williams*)

Below left Next time we send Tom to war, we promise to ask him not to clip off the bureau number with a wingtip. Grumman A-6A Intruder of VMA(AW)-242 'Bats' being 'hot refuelled' in the fuel pits at Da Nang in February 1968. We don't actually see the aviation fuel going in, but that's what Tom scribbled in his notes while the Viet Cong kept trying to interrupt his day (*Thomas H Idema*)

Right The A-6A Intruder was a major protagonist in the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign of 1965–68, a campaign which was typical of the gradualism endemic to US military policy against North Vietnam. The Marines of VMA(AW)-533 flew many missions up north as well as in-country (*Thomas H Idema*)

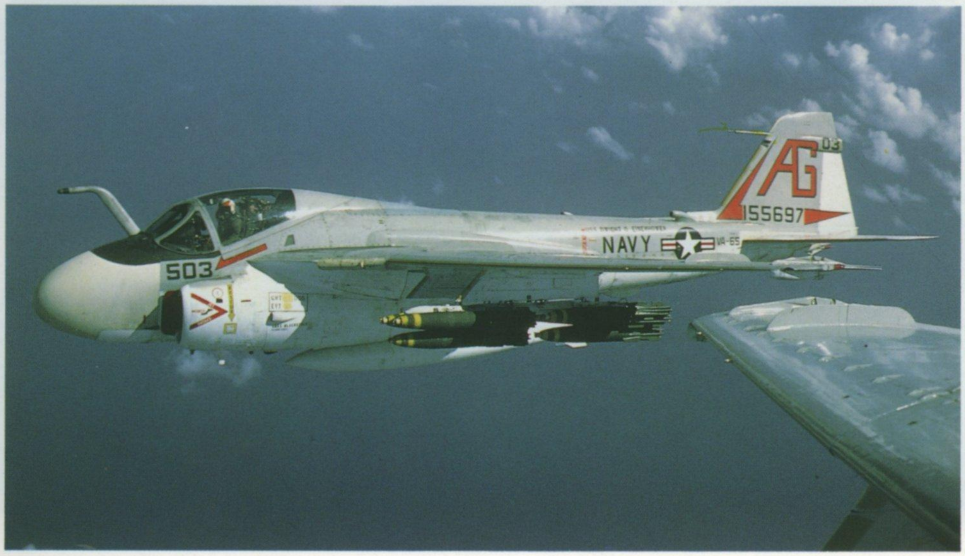
DT
MARINES



Left The damage to this 'Bats' A-6A Intruder was caused by 37 mm anti-aircraft fire on a combat mission near Hanoi (*Thomas H Idema*)

Below left When the Grumman A-6A Intruder first arrived in the Vietnam combat zone, its electronic 'black boxes' designed to assure all-weather and night attack capability were trouble-prone: Intruders spent too much time on carrier decks rather than in combat because of mechanical glitches. VA-65 'Tigers' departed their usual east coast/Atlantic Fleet hustings to fly heavily-burdened Intruders like 155697 over Route Package VI (*USN via R J Mills, Jr*)

Right It's not sharply focused. It's not cleverly composed. It's war. Slightly over-exposed in this camera frame, A-6A Intruder medium attack aircraft of VA-145 'Swordsmen' from USS *Ranger* (CVA-61) are radar-bombing through cloud cover over North Vietnam. Intruders were even more effective at low level, in bad weather (*USN via R J Mills, Jr*)



06
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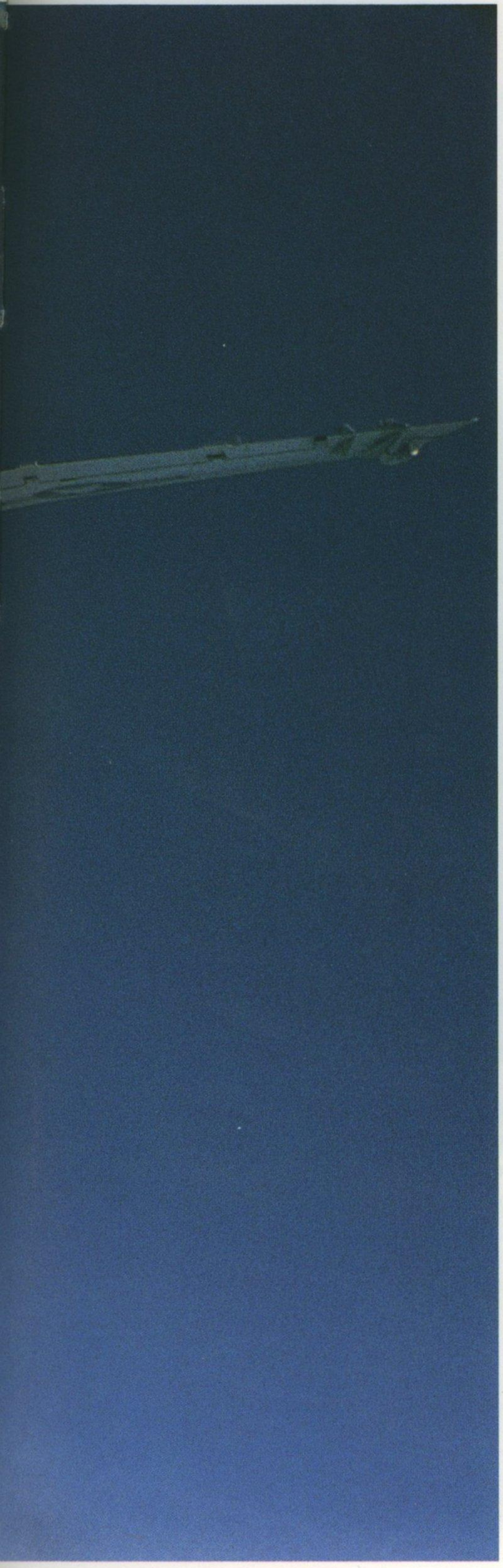
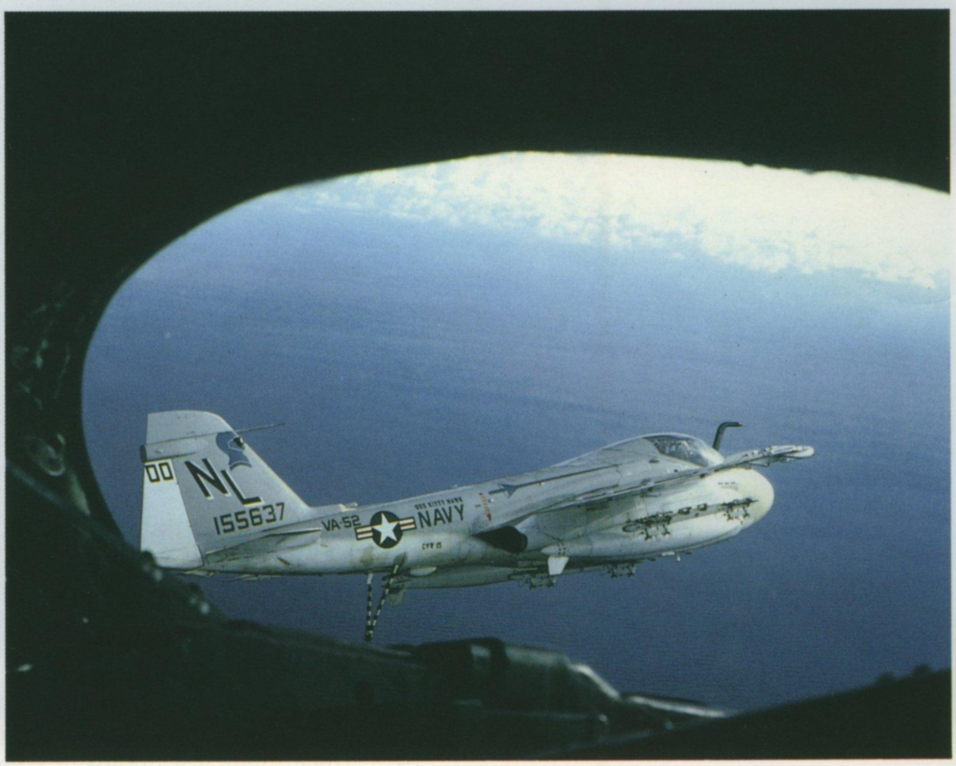
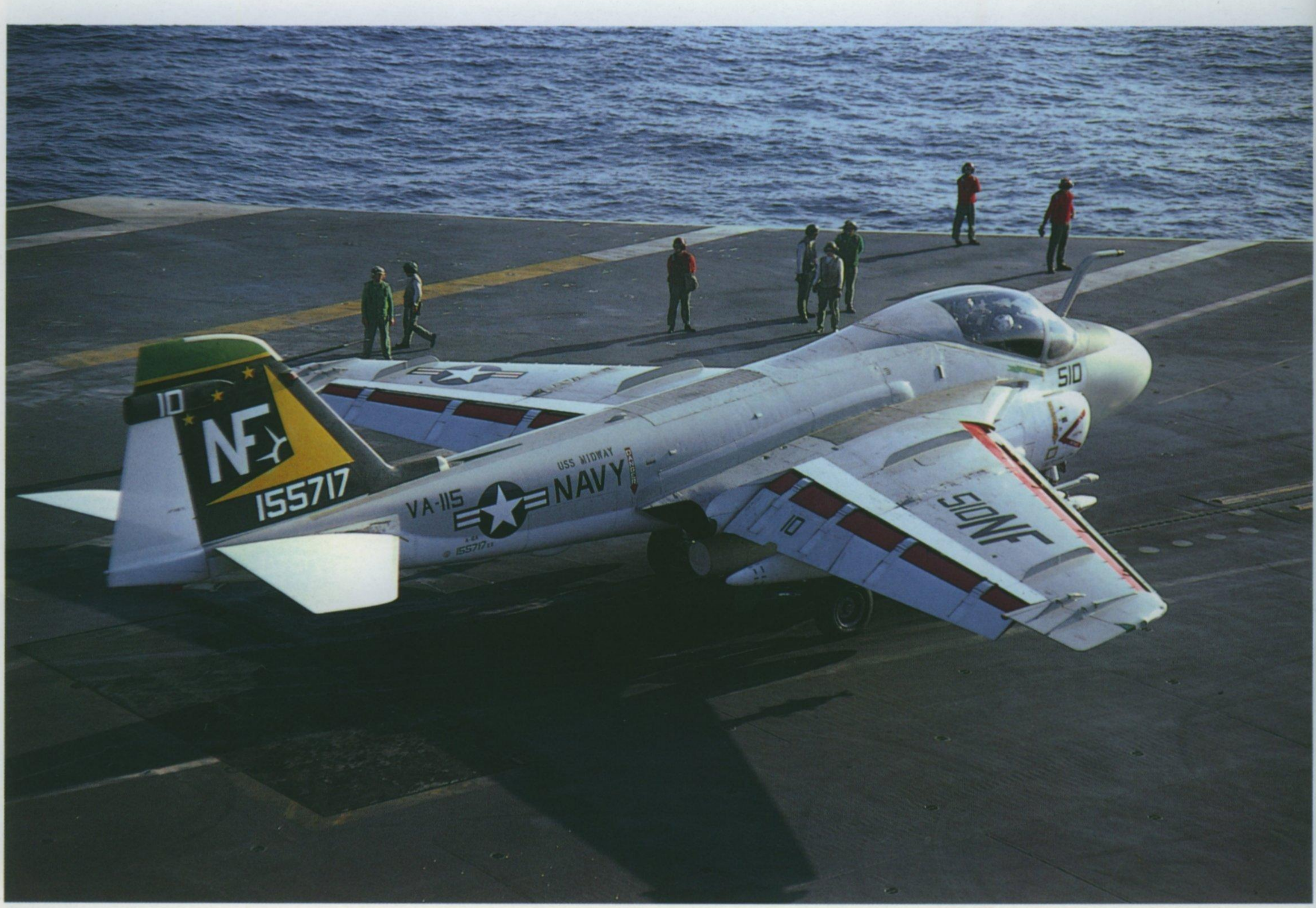


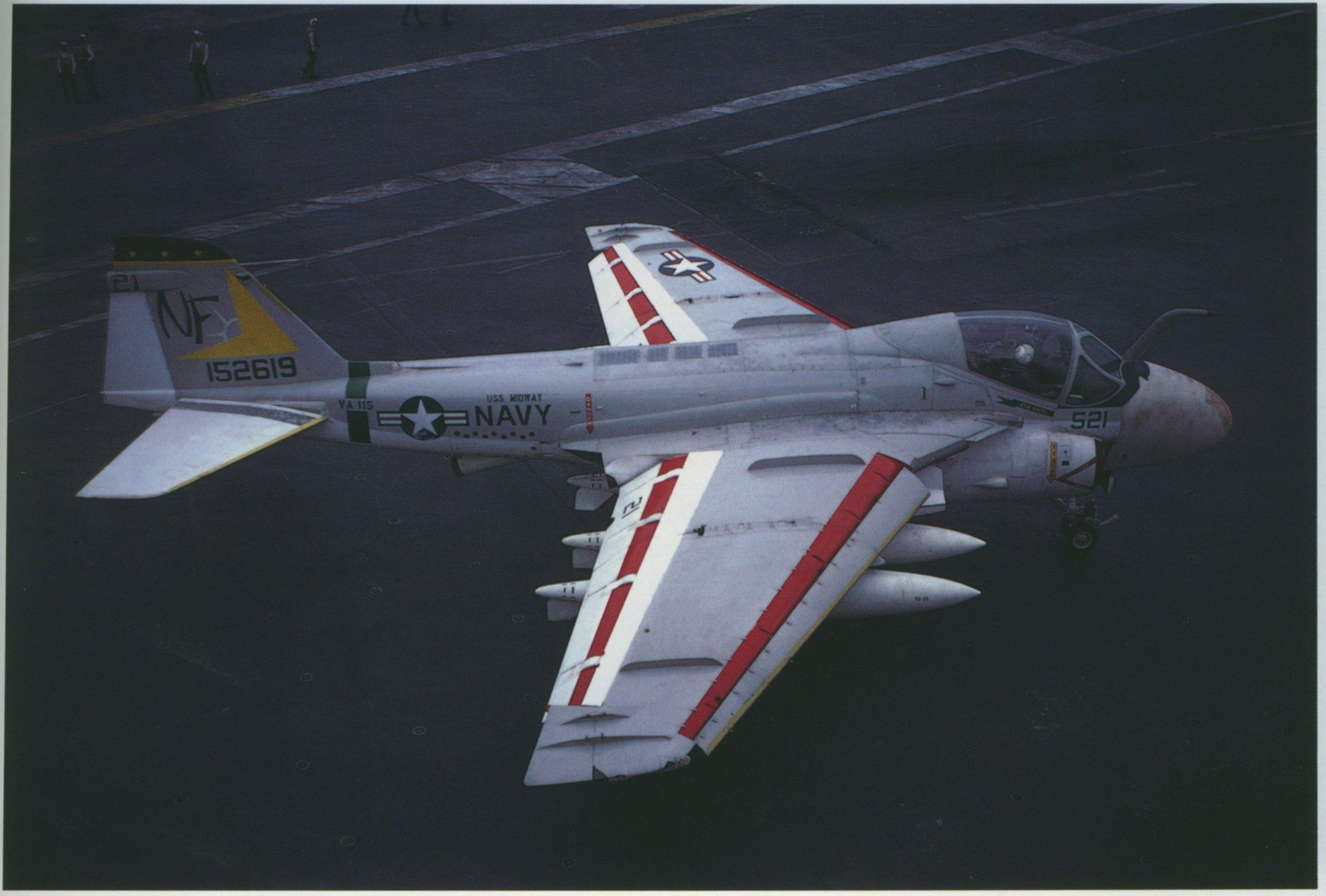


Left Refuelling recipient's view of a KA-6D Intruder tanker in the Gulf of Tonkin (*USN via R J Mills, Jr*)

Above Bureau No 155637 is an A-6A Intruder of VA-52 'Knight Riders,' bombs gone, hook down, ready to trap an okay three wire aboard USS *Kitty Hawk* (CVA-63). At night, the Intruder was the only American combat aircraft which could routinely rove the skies of North Vietnam and strike high-value targets accurately (*USN via R J Mills, Jr*)



'Arabs,' or VA-115, Intruder, an A-6A (Bureau No 155717) on the deck of USS *Midway* (CVA-41) in the Western Pacific just after the evacuation of Saigon in 1975. The Intruder was originally a replacement for the A-1 Skyraider in the medium attack role, but it provided far more than just a jet-propelled replacement for the 'Spad.' Once its radar and electronics were perfected, the Intruder could strike at any hour, in any weather (*Steve Daniels*)



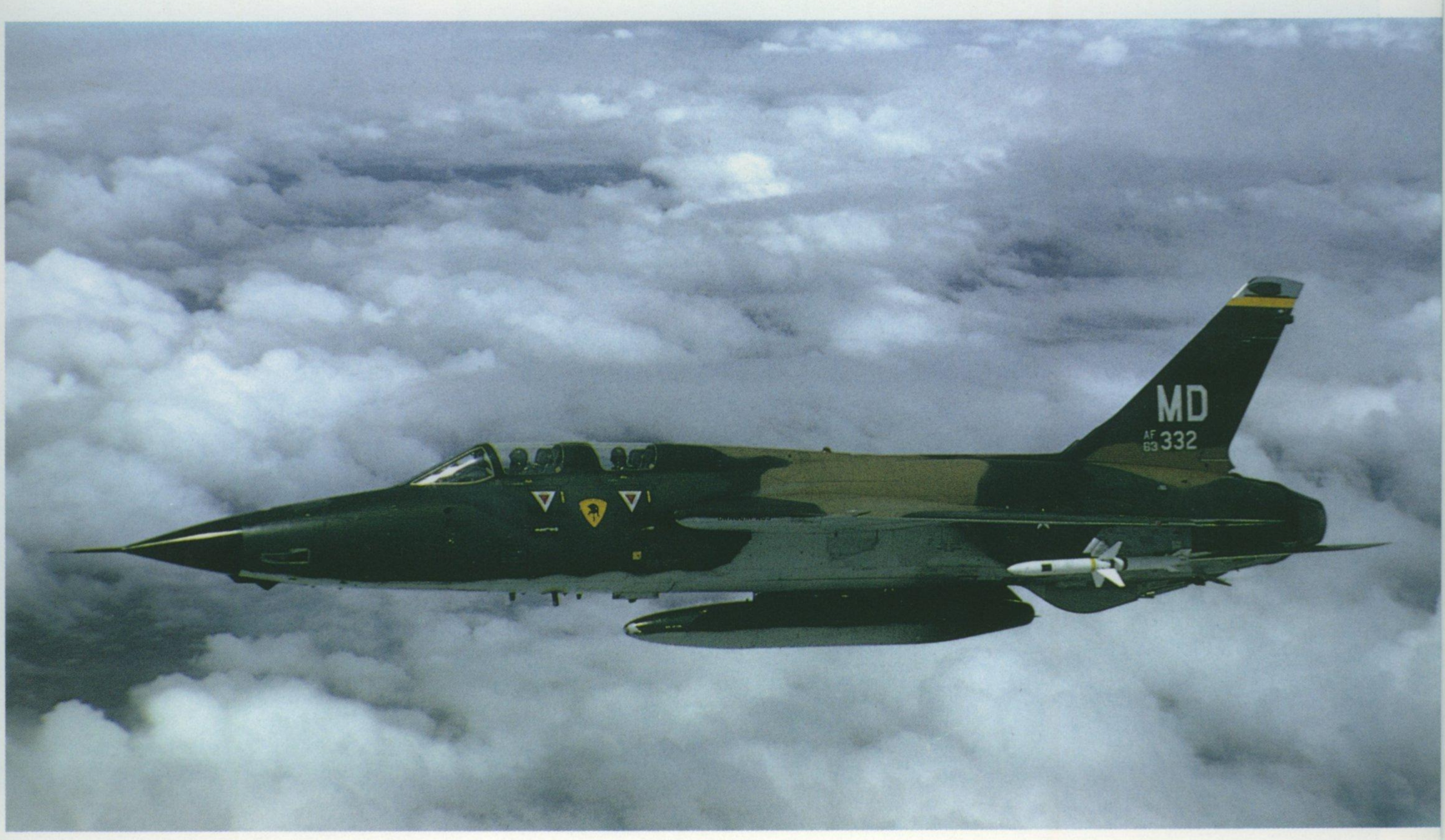
On the deck of the ageing carrier USS *Midway* (CVA-41), KA-6D Intruder 152619 carrying plenty of fuel for itself and a few friends appears to be taxying away from recovery after a successful flight. Squadron is VA-115 'Arabs,' another outfit which has had to change its nickname in more recent years. These markings were in use at the time of the evacuation of Saigon on 30 April 1975 (*Steve Daniels*)

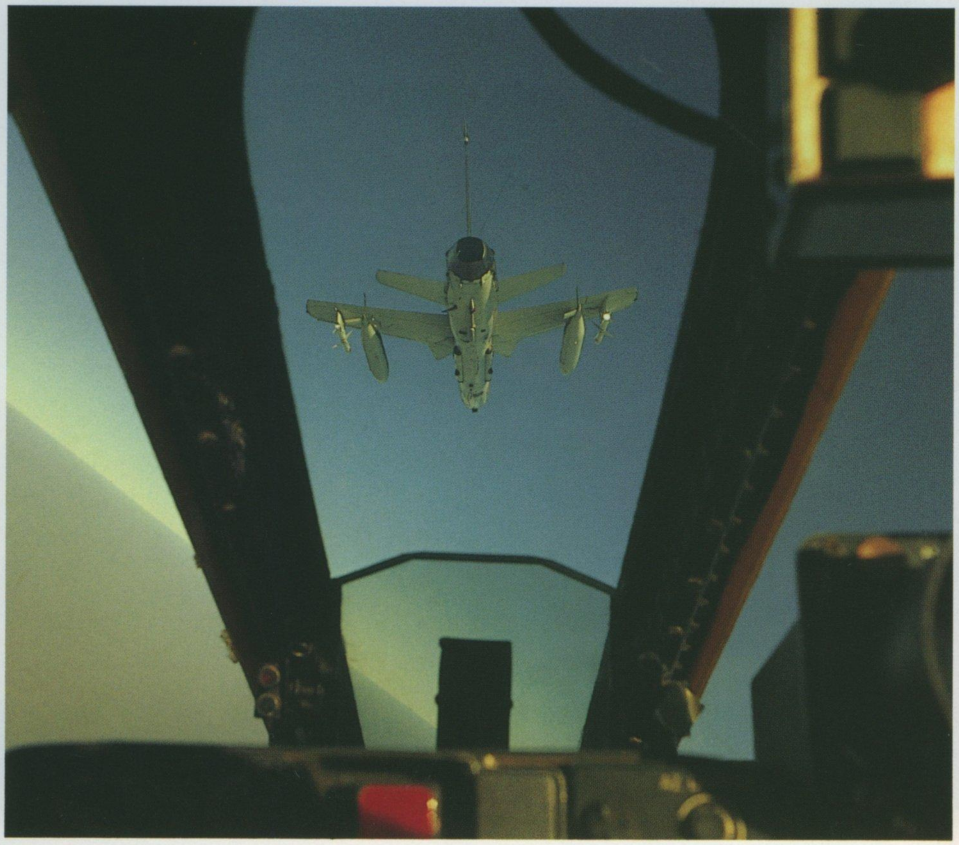
WW
38 320
WW
434
072602
AIR FORCE
OZ
352

Thuds

Left Where'd he come from? McDonnell Douglas RF-4C Phantom II 69-0352 from the 14th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, at Udorn sneaks between Wild Weasel Republic F-105G Thunderchiefs of the 561st Tactical Fighter Wing to take a drink from KC-135A Stratotanker 57-2602 during the final days of Linebacker operations against North Vietnam in 1972 (*Donald W Kilgus*)

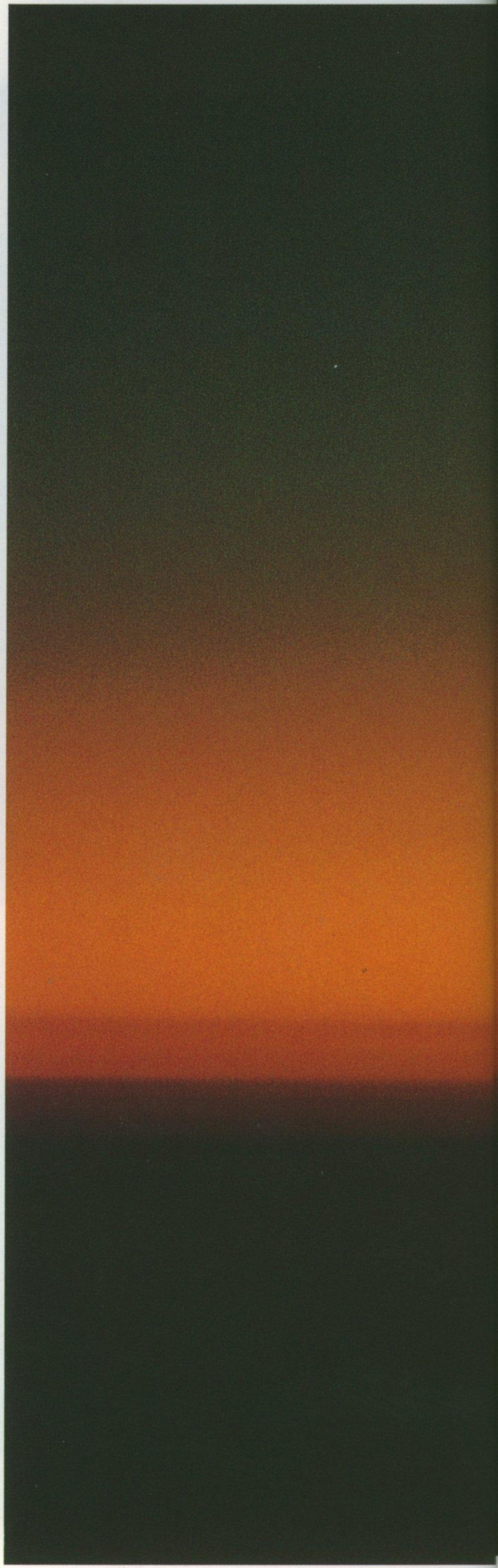
Below The Republic F-105F Thunderchief, armed with AGM-45 Shrike missiles and with a back-seat EWO (electronic warfare officer), or 'Bear,' became the Americans' secret weapon against North Vietnam's SAM sites. 63-4332 belongs to the 561st Tactical Fighter Squadron. Shrike could not continue homing on SAM-associated radars after they were shut down, but was highly effective in closing off the missile threat to US strike aircraft (*Donald W Kilgus*)





Above Though it had two seats and was configured for 'Wild Weasel' operations, the Republic F-105G Thunderchief had been built with the full combat capability of the single-place Thud, and some two-seat models succeeded in shooting down MiGs in air battles. This F-105G is seen through the canopy windshield of a second G model in a bank (*Donald W Kilgus*)

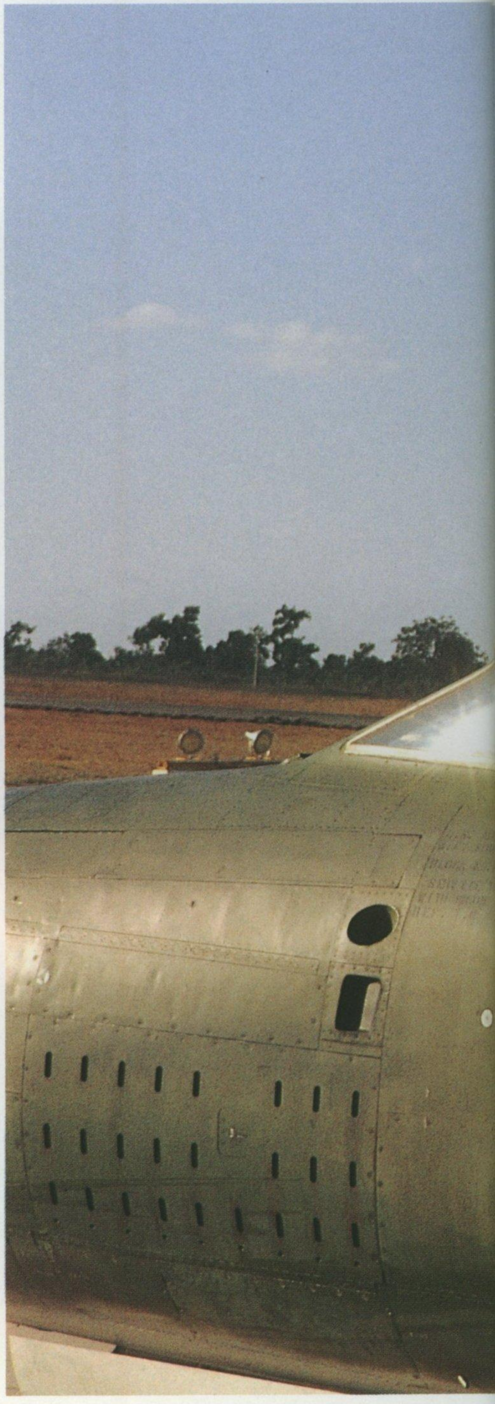
Right Thud and KC-135 tanker form in the sunset (*Donald W Kilgus*)



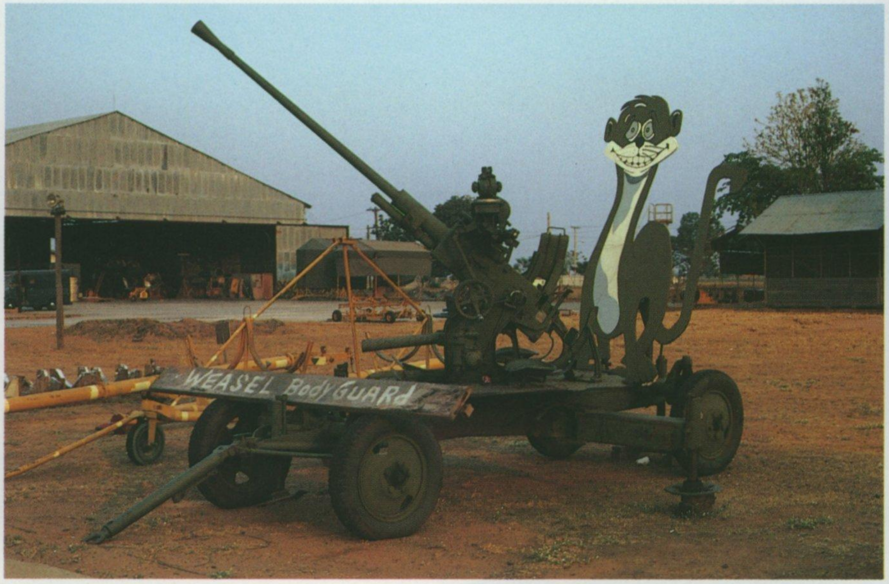
Below Korat, one of those fighter bases burdened by the mouthful Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB), mounted the bulk of F-105 Thunderchief missions against Hanoi during the 1965–68 Rolling Thunder campaign, and later played home to a host of Phantoms. There actually were few Thai military personnel on the base, but Thailand's support for the war up north was invaluable (*M P Curphey*)

WELCOME TO KORAT

Right The business end of an F-105G Wild Weasel SAM-suppression aircraft. The *Polish Glider* was originally an F-105D 59-1822 flown by Major Donald Kutyna of the 44th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Takhli. It's unclear whether Kutyna also flew this ship, which belongs to the 561st Tactical Fighter Squadron and is seen in January 1973 (*Donald W Kilgus*)

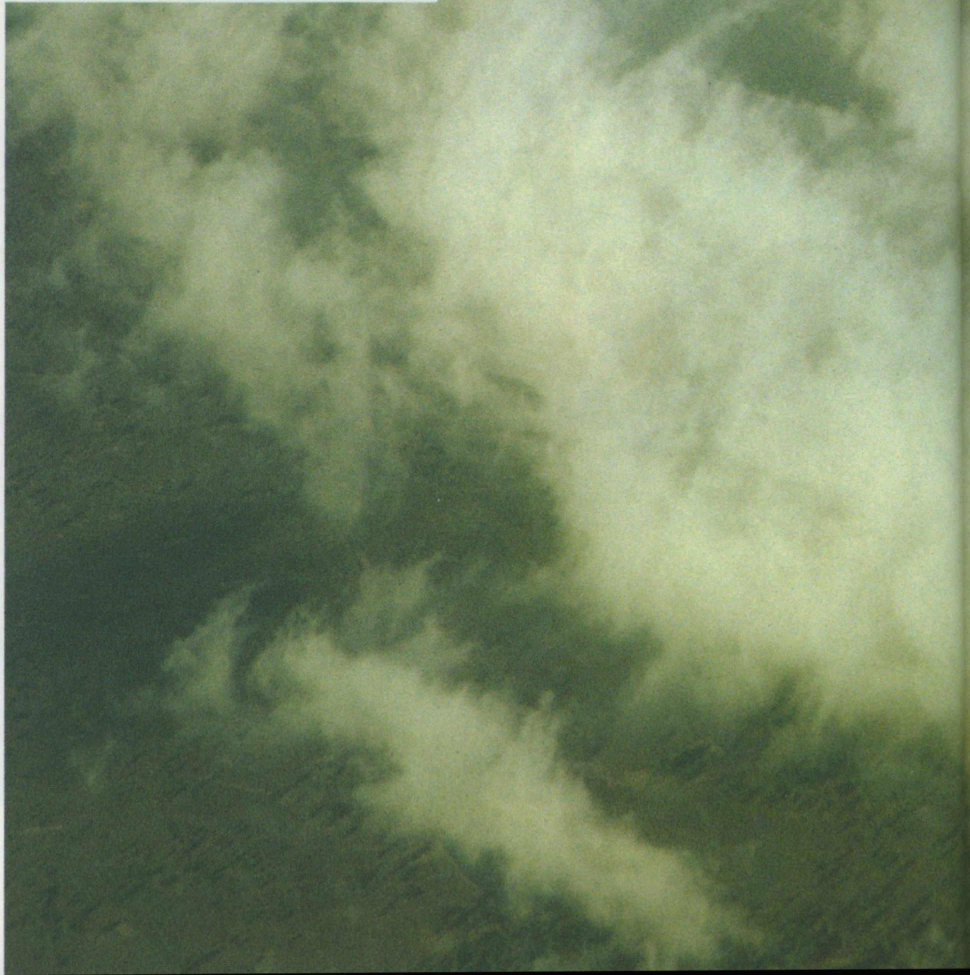


PILOT MAJ. DAN BARRY
REAR CAPT. MIKE
DANGER
RESCUE
POLISH GLIDE



Above 'Wild Weasel,' the non-regulation mascot of the 17th and 561st Tactical Fighter Squadrons, keeps careful watch over an item of captured North Vietnamese 37-mm equipment at Takhli. Similar cannons were used in the Hanoi region on American fighter pilots with the pronounced purpose of killing them (*Donald W Kilgus*)

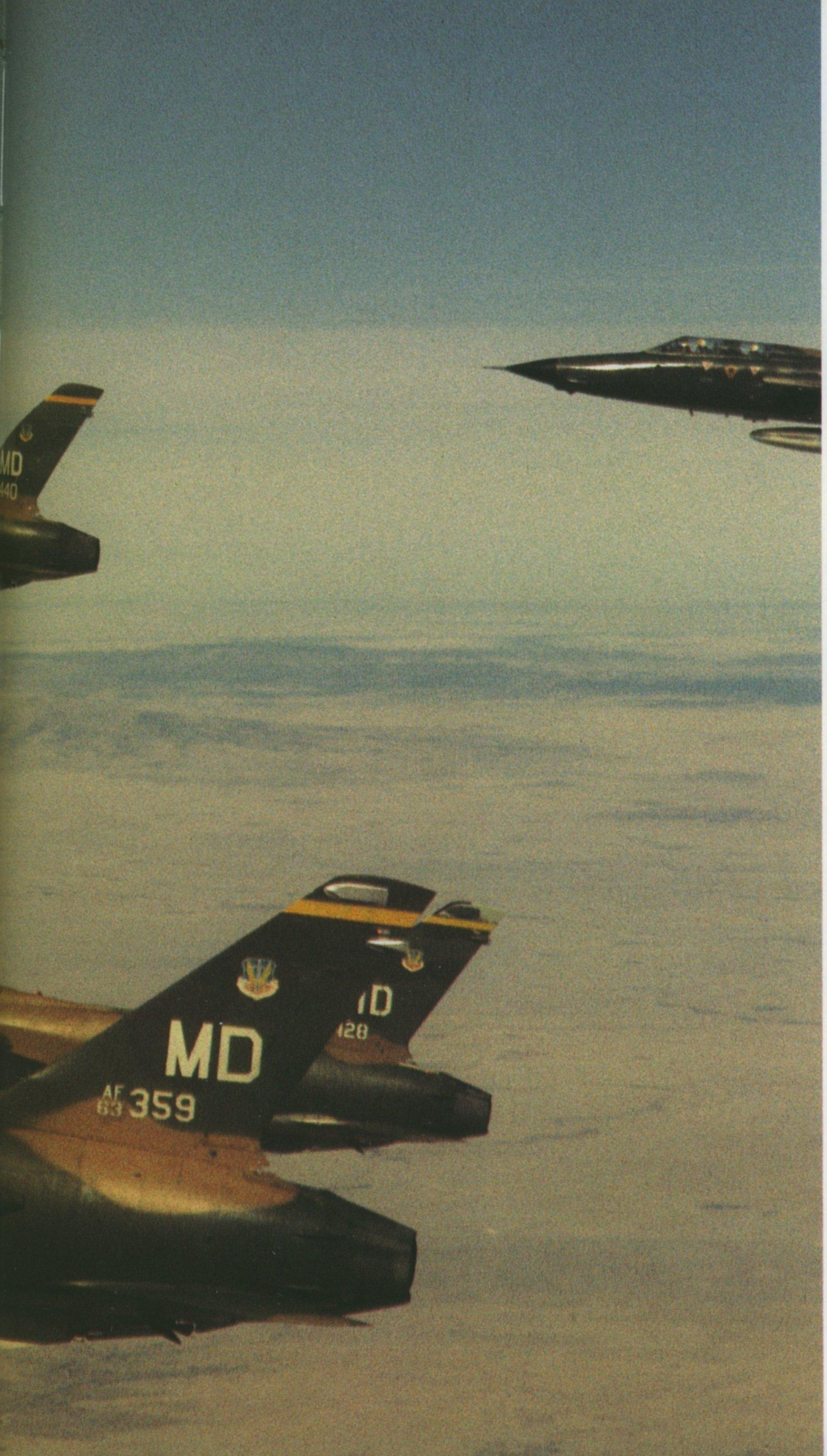
Right The men who went to war in fast jets were there, to begin with, because they'd wanted to fly since they were kids. Few of them enjoyed killing. Fewer, still, were poets or orators, and almost none would have been able to put words to the purpose, the motive, which had gotten them into the cockpit to begin with—the simple joy of flight. Kilgus did it with his camera, in this instance with a Republic F-105 Thunderchief of the 561 st Tactical Fighter Wing (*Donald W Kilgus*)



WW
WW

'Wild Weasel, Wild Weasel, they call me by name,' began the ditty sung by fighter pilots to the tune of *Sweet Betsy from Pike*. *'I fly up to Thud Ridge and play the big game.'* Don Kilgus caught their spirit with his camera during a mission with a brilliant sun in the background. *'I fly o'er the valleys and hide 'hind the hills.'* Kilgus kept getting closer with his camera until he had it right. *'I dodge all the missiles, then go in for the kills.'* The aircraft is a WW-coded Republic F-105F Thunderchief in about January 1973 (*Donald W Kilgus*)

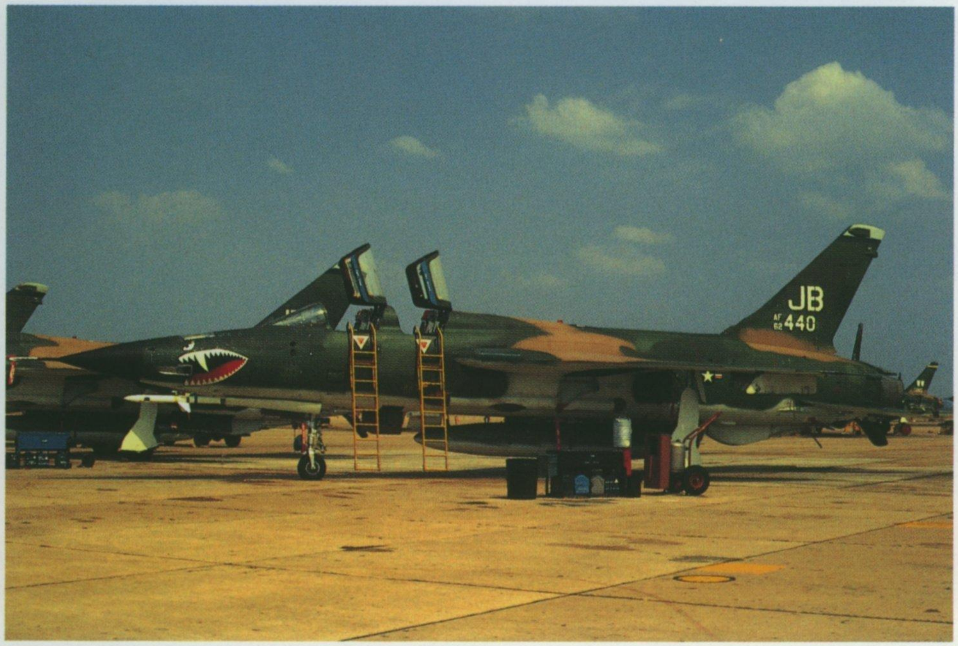
0-72600



Back from the war at the end of January 1973, pilots and electronic warfare officers of the 561st Tactical Fighter Squadron—part of the 23rd Tactical Fighter Wing—gaggle up to a KC-135 Stratotanker over the Southwest American desert, ready to take on fuel. These F-105F Thunderchiefs are veterans of the fighting around Hanoi and have now returned to McConnell AFB, Kansas for their postwar assignment; 63-8359 in foreground (*Donald W Kilgus*)

WW
AF 62 434

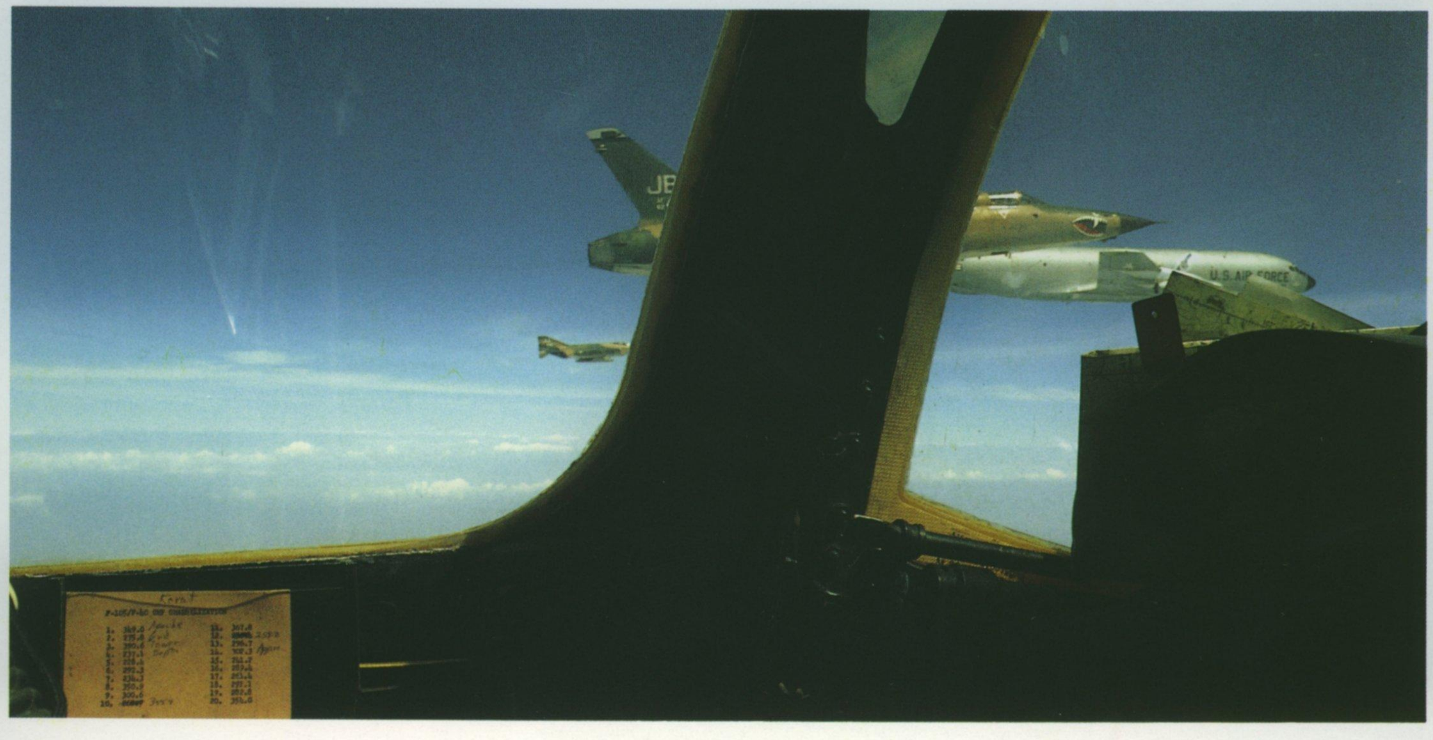
Refuelling and combat operations in Republic F-105F and F-105G Thunderchiefs in 1972–73 (*Donald W Kilgus*)



Left The two-seat Republic F-105G version of the anti-SAM 'Wild Weasel' was distinguished by the AN/ALQ-105 blister on each side of the fuselage just above the unused internal bomb bay doors. The JB tailcode denotes the 17th Wild Weasel Squadron, part of the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at Korat, Thailand (*Donald W Kilgus*)

Below As seen from the pilot's front seat, F-105G from the 17th Wild Weasel Squadron refuel from a KC-135 Stratotanker over Southeast Asia (*Donald W Kilgus*)

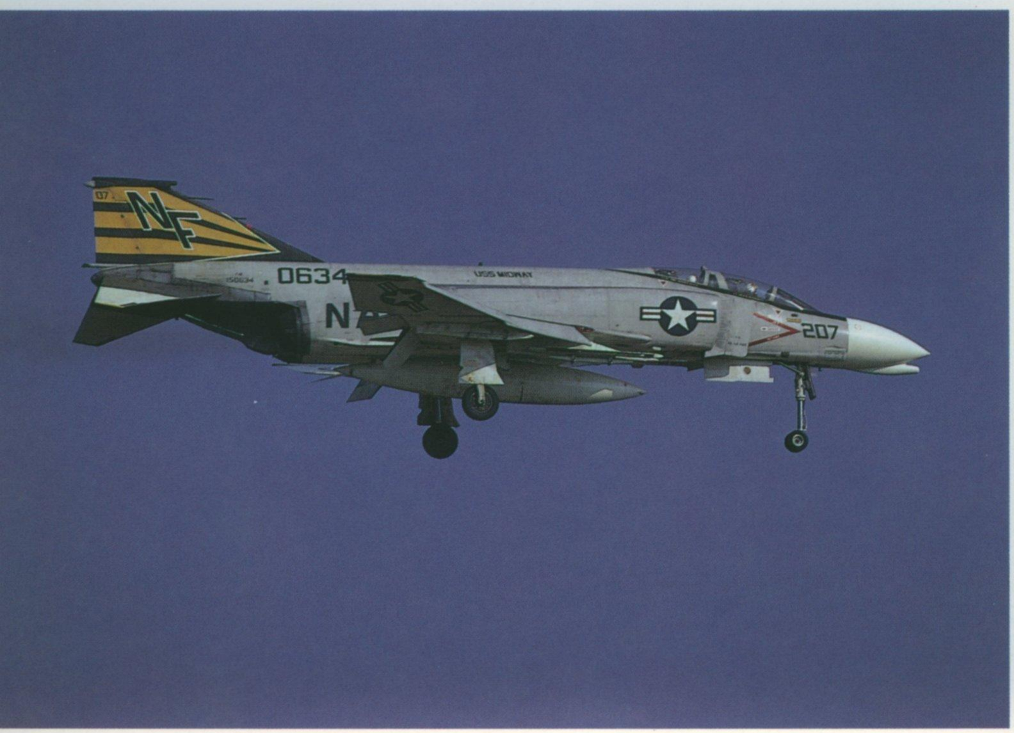
Right Kilgus at the controls of an F-105G Thunderchief (*Donald W Kilgus*)

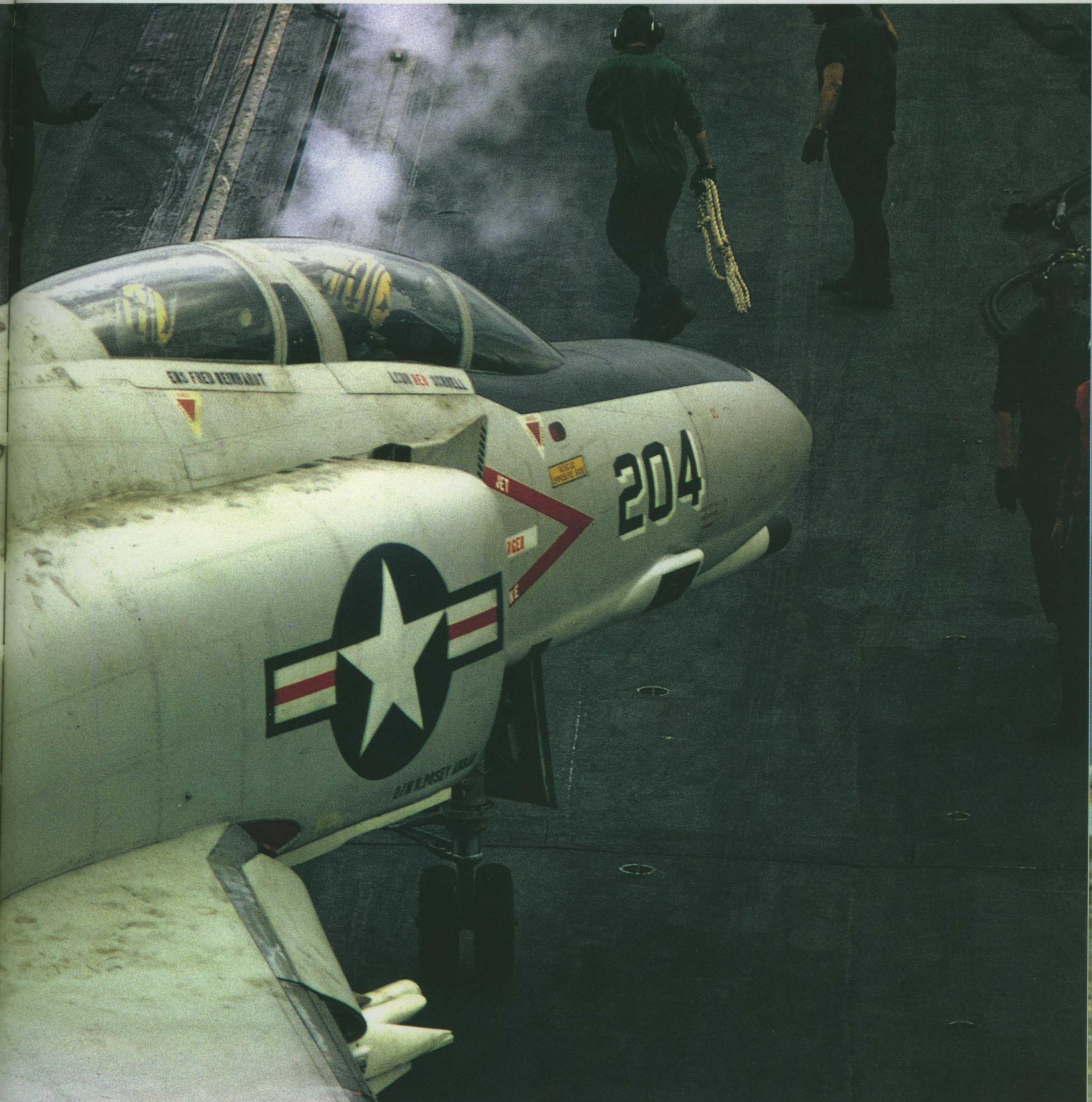


Phantoms, Phantoms, Phantoms

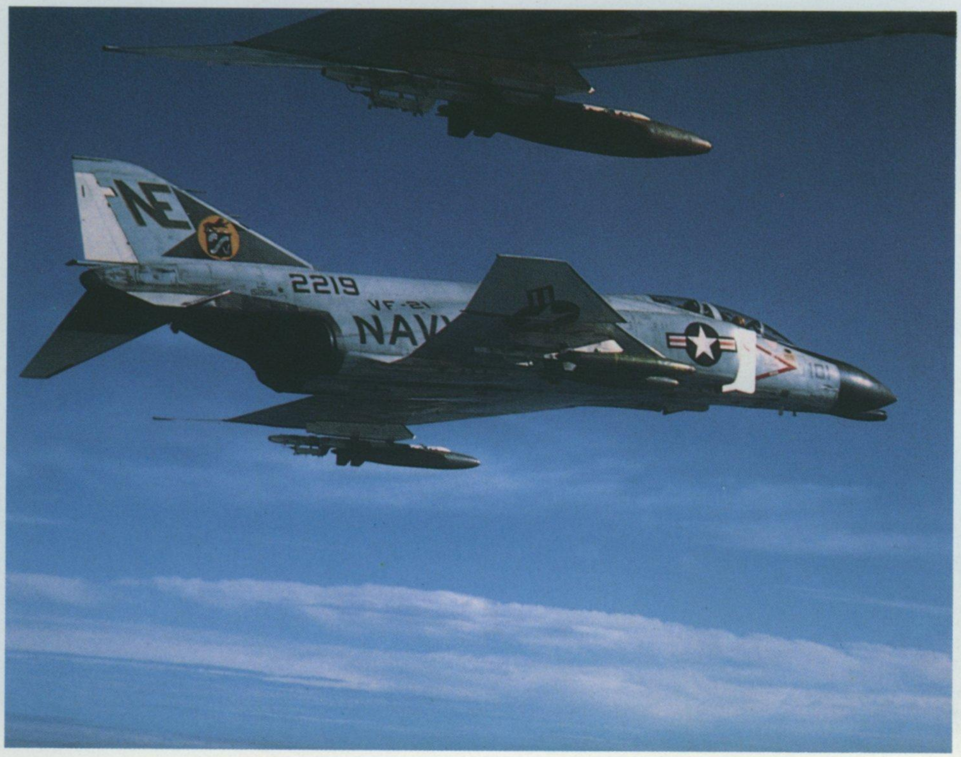
Right McDonnell Douglas F-4B Phantom II of VF-32 'Swordsmen' aboard USS *Franklin D Roosevelt* (CVA-42) during combat operations against North Vietnam in 1965 (*Vince McCarthy*)

Below A MiG killer descending at Atsugi, Japan. This F-4B Phantom II (Bureau No 150634) shot down a MiG-17 near Hanoi on 6 October 1965 while crewed by LCDR Dan McIntyre and LTJG Alan Johnson of VF-151 'Fighting Vigilantes.' The Phantom had been converted to an F-4N model by 28 March 1975 when it was making this approach to Atsugi, but the colourful markings remained nearly the same as they had been during the victory-making dogfight. Phantoms first appeared in Vietnam's skies during the August 1964 'Gulf of Tonkin incident' and were still in action during the April 1975 evacuation of Saigon (*Masumi Wada*)

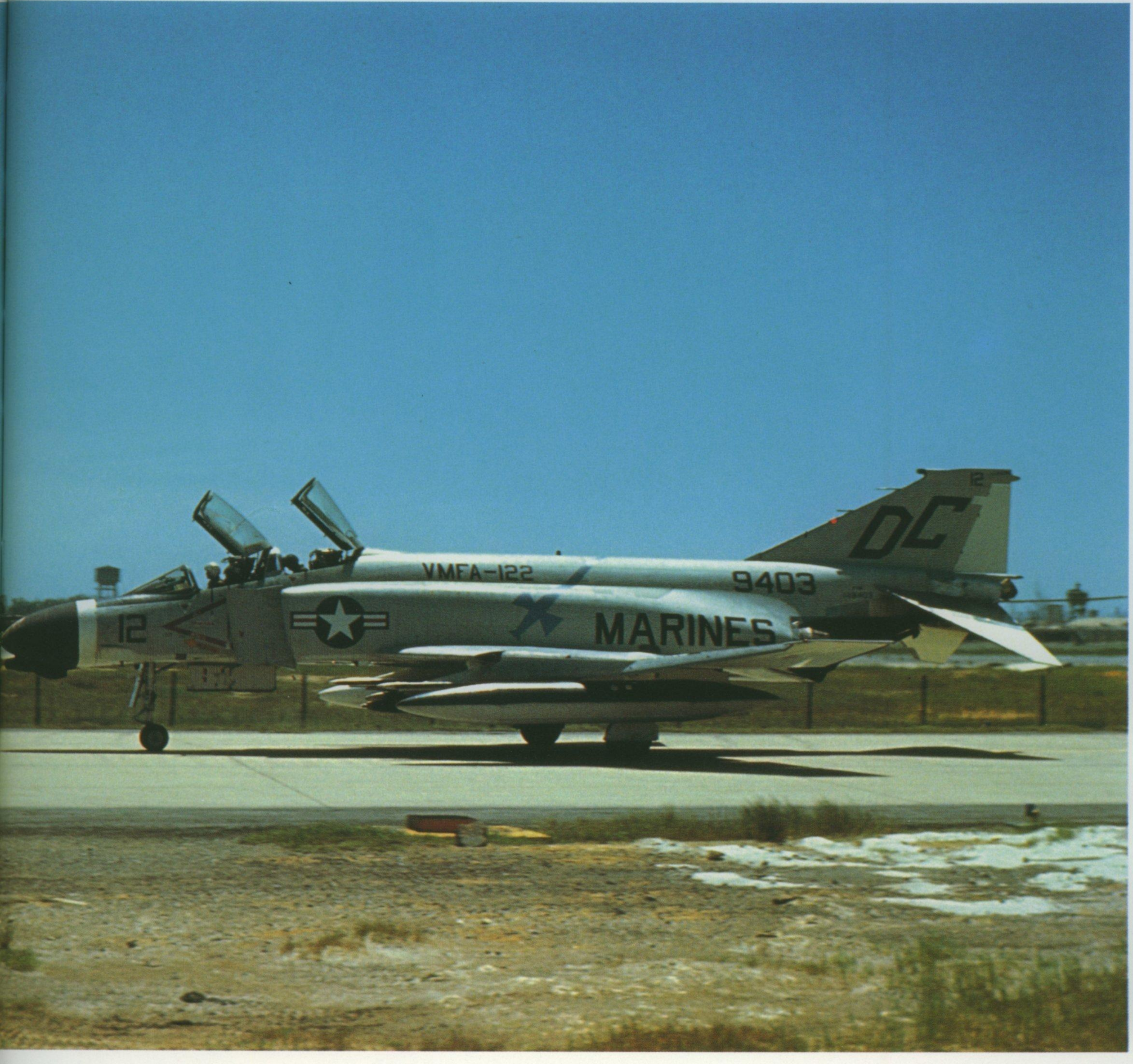



ENS FRED REINHARDT
LCDR RED SCHELL
204
JET

Below 'Freelancers' VF-21 Phantom II heading north to visit Ho Chi Minh in 1968 with a partial load of ordnance which may reflect the 'bomb shortage' of the period. Secretary of Defense McNamara said there was no insufficiency of bombs, but empty racks beneath wings were routine at this time. This F-4B (Bureau No 152219) shot down a MiG-17 in the Navy's second aerial kill of the war on 17 June 1965 while wearing the markings shown here (*USN*)

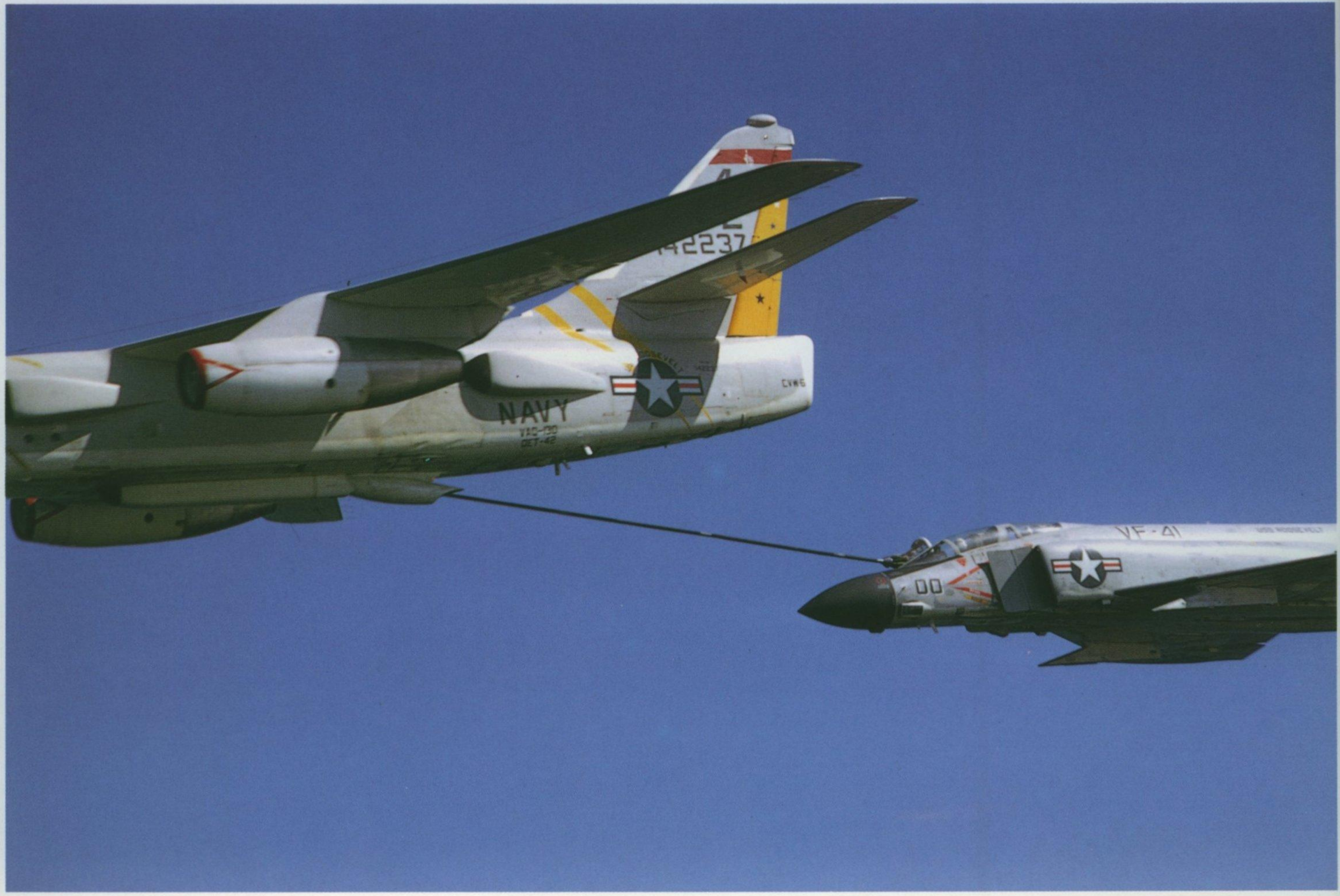


Right McDonnell F-4B Phantom II 149403, coded DC-12, taxies out at Da Nang—but is that a *Marine Corps* fuel tank hanging under Double Ugly's port wing or have the leathernecks borrowed a T.O.-114 camouflaged example from those Air Force guys across the field who live in *air conditioning*? (*Thomas H Idema*)


12
DC
VMFA-122
9403
12
MARINES

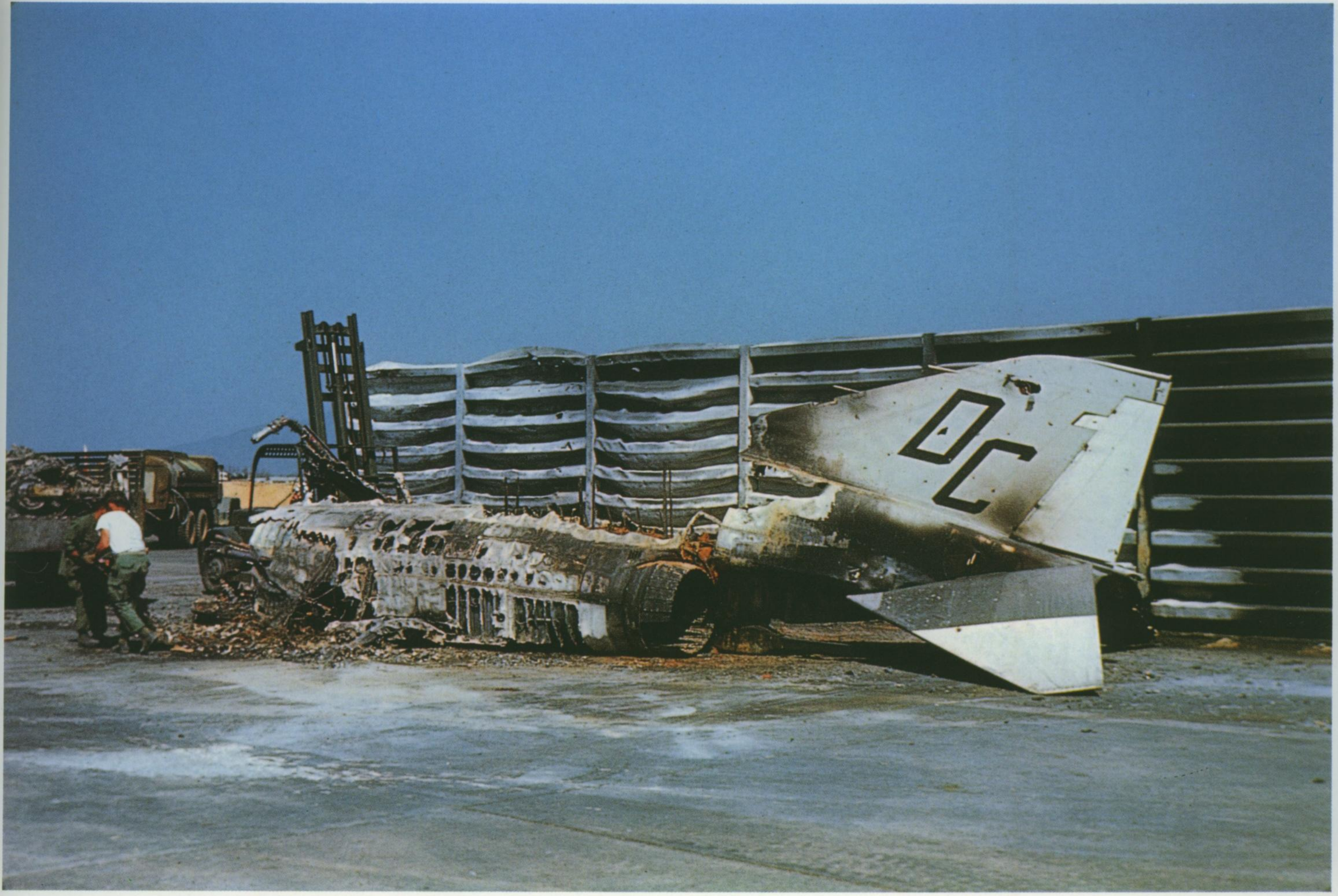
MARINES

DC
VMFA-122
9403
MARINES
WH
MARINES

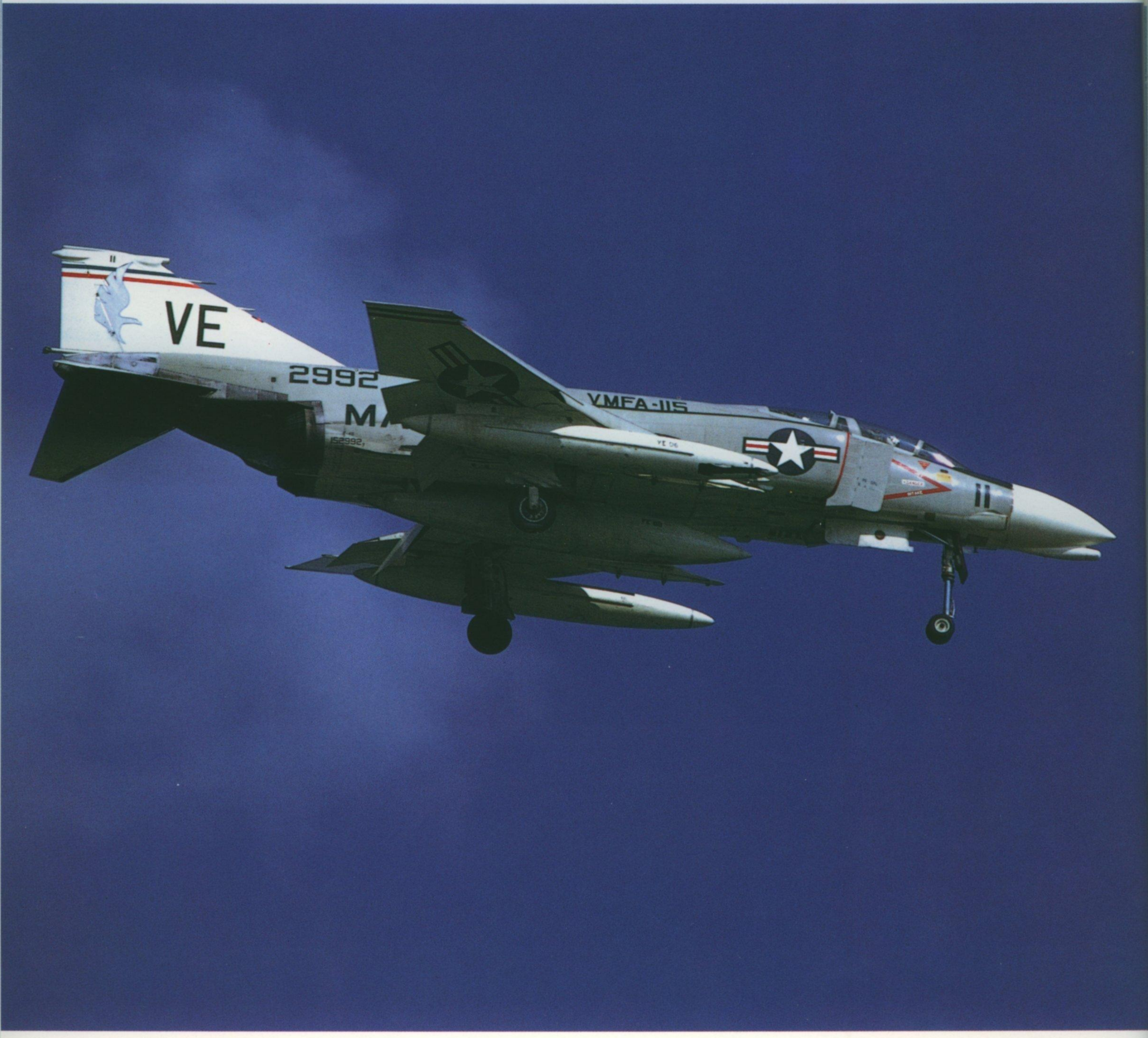


Above Vietnam was the first war in which air refuelling was used routinely on combat missions. This tanker is an EKA-3B Skywarrior (Bureau No 142237) of Detachment 42, VAQ-130 'Zappers,' operating from USS *Franklin D Roosevelt* (CVA-42) with its carrier's name painted in a most unusual, non-standard format around the national insignia. The recipient is an F-4J Phantom II from VF-41 'Black Aces.' Both squadrons flew these aircraft in combat on a 1965 cruise aboard *FDR*

Preceding pages F-4B Phantom IIs of Lt Col John Verdi's VMFA-122 'Crusaders' taxi out and fly off at Da Nang in August 1968. Lying ahead on 1 October 1968 is a bombing halt which will empty the skies of North Vietnam of American combat aircraft for more than three years (*Thomas H Idema*)



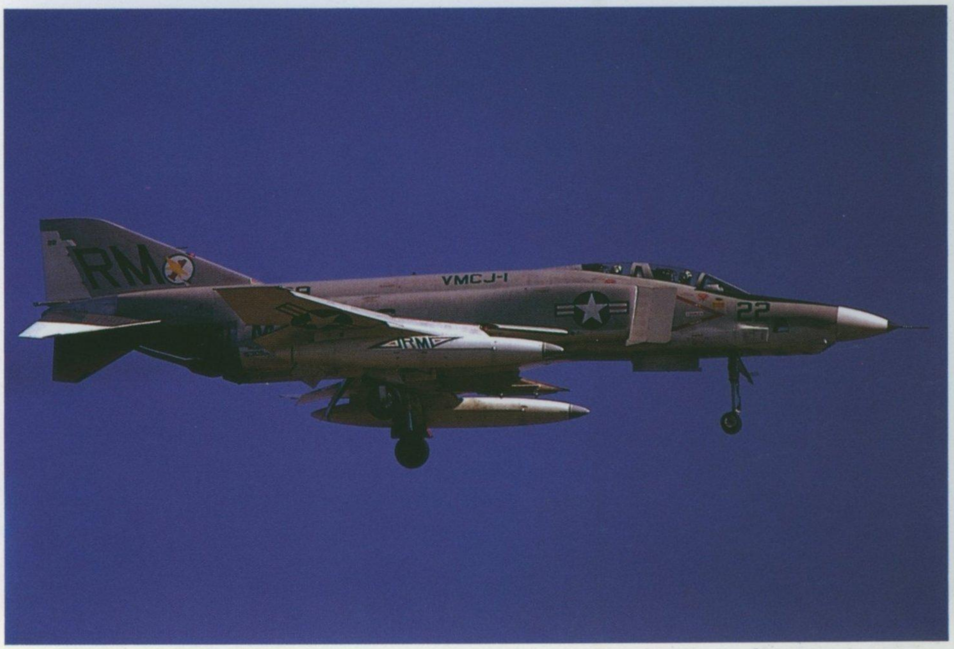
The other side never mounted air attacks on US bases, but concern over Victor Charlie's rockets was far from ill-founded. This Phantom belonging to VMFA-122 'Death Rattlers' commanded by Lt Col John Verdi was destroyed by a Viet Cong rocket during the January–February 1968 Tet Offensive (*Thomas H Idema*)

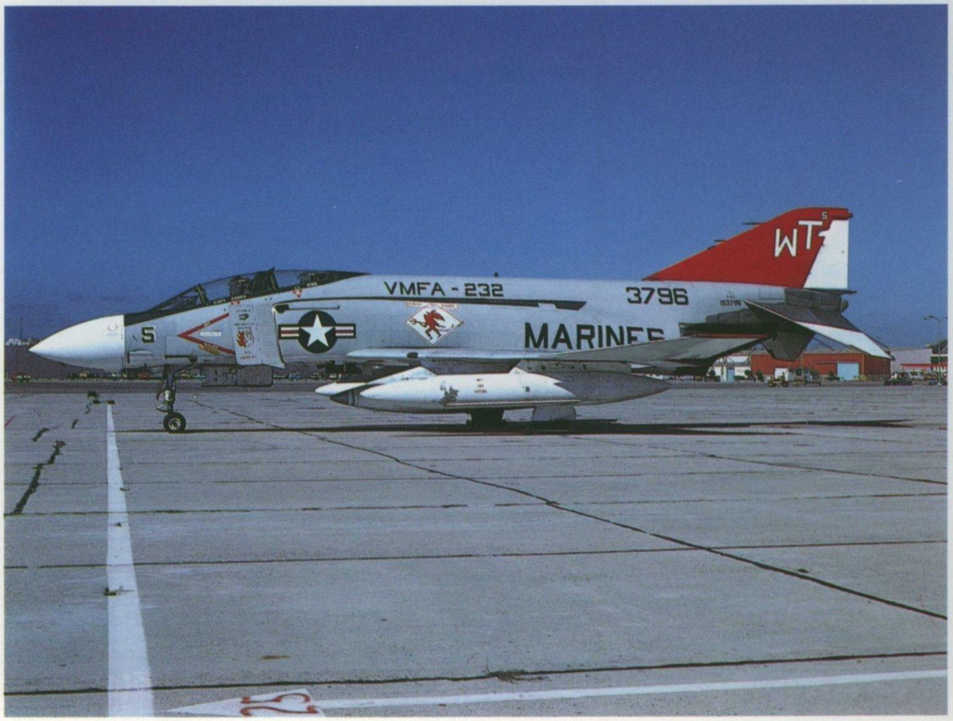

VE
2992
MA
VMFA-115
11

Left The contribution to the fight up north by US Marine Corps aviation was bolstered by VMFA-115 'Silver Eagles,' which was one of the first and one of the last squadrons in combat. F-4B Phantom II 152992 of the squadron has everything hanging down as it approaches for a landing at the Naval Air Facility, Atsugi, Japan, on 24 August 1974 (*Masumi Wada*)

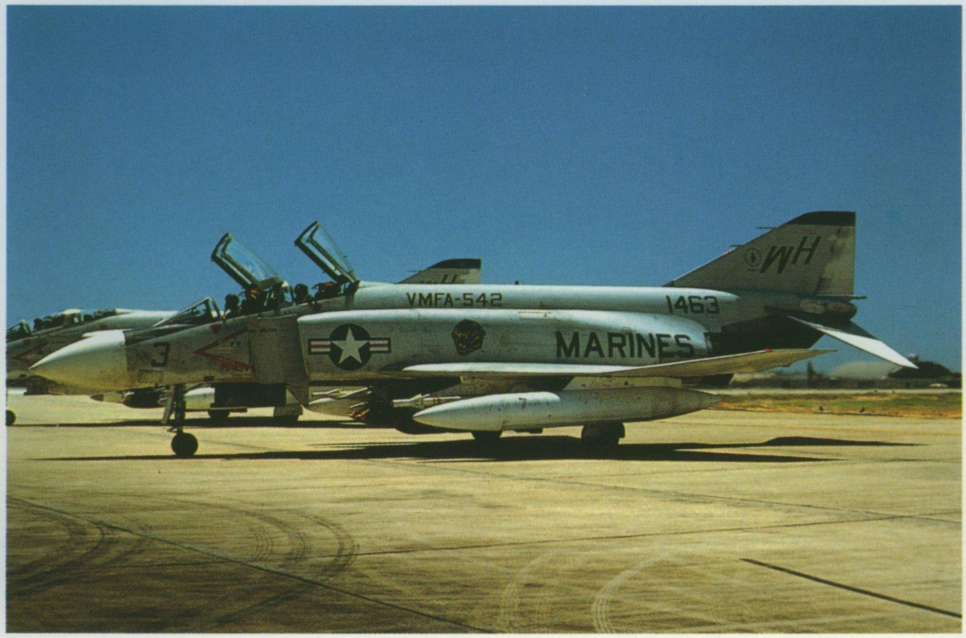
Above right The version of the Phantom II built in smallest numbers (just 48) was the RF-4B photo-reconnaissance aircraft for the US Marine Corps, another veteran which participated in Vietnam action from the beginning of the build-up in 1965 until the withdrawal of Marine aviation after the cease-fire in 1973. Marine composite reconnaissance squadron VMCJ-1, one of the few outfits in the sea services not to have a nickname, operated the RF-4B throughout the war (*Masumi Wada*)

Right Marine Corps fighter-bombers transferred in the early 1970s to Nam Phong, Thailand, a spot renowned for red dust part of the year, mud the rest, called the 'Rose Garden,' and renowned as the only airfield not adjacent to water from which the Marines have ever fought. The last squadron to fly in combat in Southeast Asia was the 'Red Devils' of VMFA-232 and the last F-4J Phantom II out was 153796, wearing the markings shown here when the Marines ended their presence in the combat zone in August 1973 (*Michael Grove*)





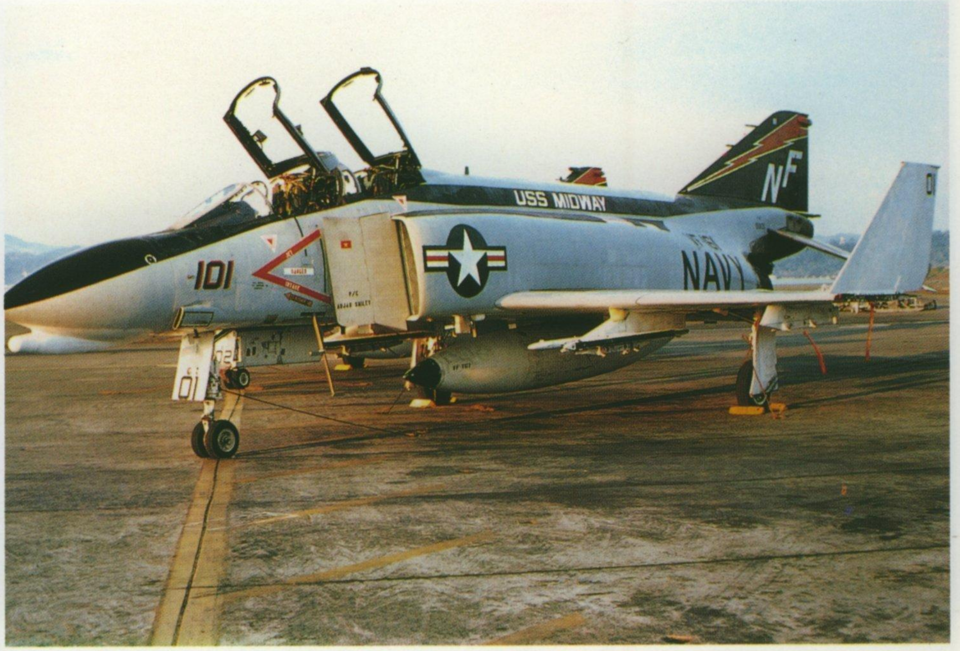
Below Adorned with the tiger's head associated with Marine Corps squadron VMFA-542 'Bengals' is McDonnell F-4B Phantom II (Bureau No 151463) carries AIM-9 Sidewinders and is configured for air-to-air action in 1967 (*Thomas H Idema*)



Right Marine Captain G Roberts Hanke went to Vietnam with the 'Gray Ghosts' of VMFA-531 and their F-4B Phantom IIs at the beginning of 1975. This pose was photographed at Atsugi, Japan, en route to Vietnam and may be influenced by the fact that Bob Hanke had once been the subject of a recruiting poster! It was the 'Ghosts' only combat tour in the entire Vietnam war period, but the Marines flew a considerable number of missions, south and north (*Hanke*)

RESCUE
DANGER
JET
INTAKE
CAUTION

AC
110

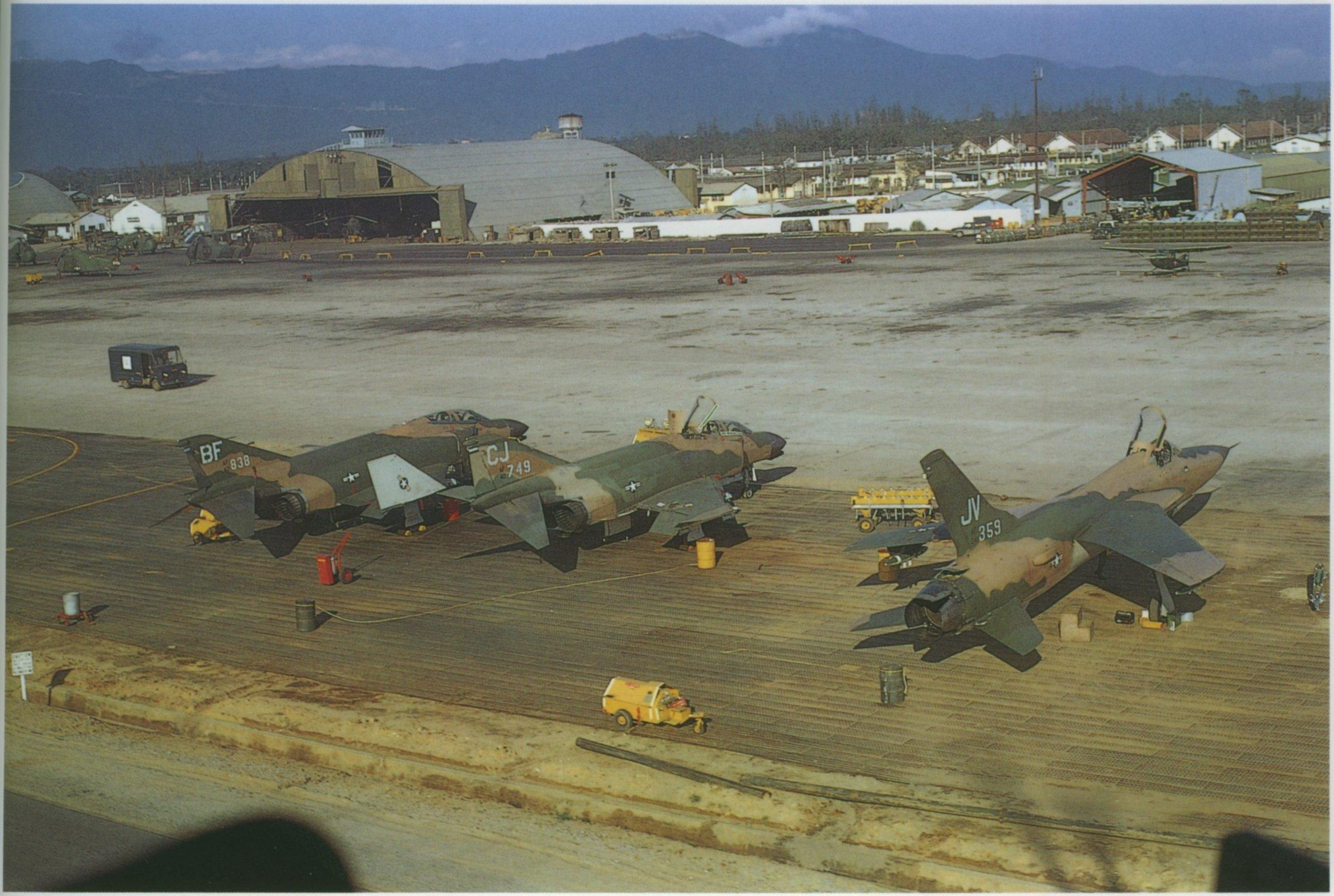


Left VF-31, the 'Topcatters,' is traditionally an east coast/Atlantic Fleet squadron but made a prolonged combat cruise in Vietnam from 11 April 1972 to 13 February 1973, its F-4J Phantom IIs often being heavily armed like 155839 (AC-110), seen with a major cargo of Sparrows, Sidewinders and cluster bombs. Another F-4J in the same squadron, flown by CDR Samuel C Flynn and LT William H John scored this squadron's only MiG kill, claiming a MiG-21 on 21 June 1972 (*via Larry Davis*)

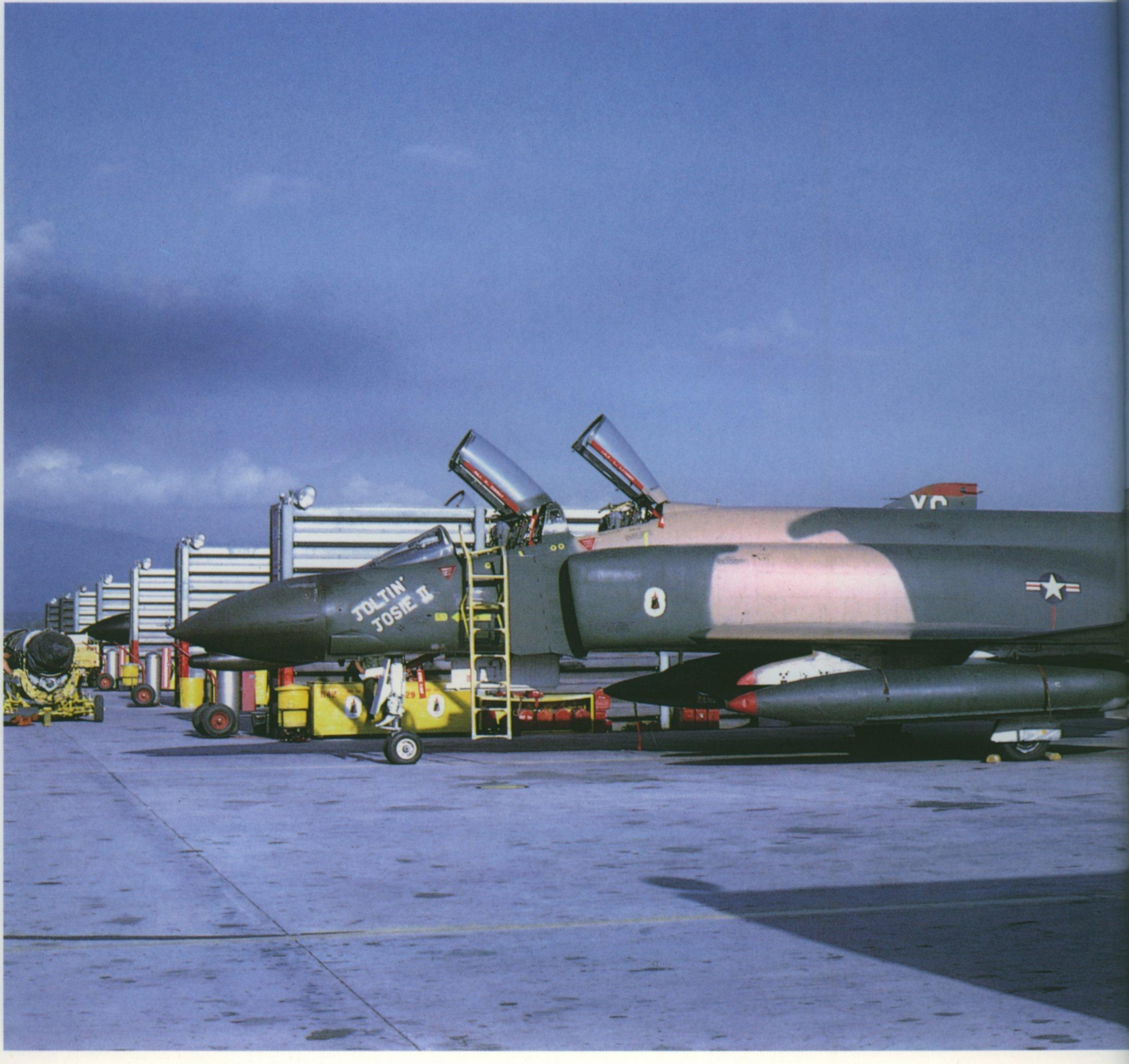
Above Ship 150631 in the markings of VF-161 'Chargers.' This F-4B Phantom II wears a very unusual North Vietnamese—rather than Russian-style—MiG kill and really *did* shoot down a MiG-21—on 10 August 1967 while serving with VF-142 'Ghostriders,' crewed by LCDRs Robert C Davis and Gayle O Elie, and flying from USS *Constellation* (CVA-64). Any view of this Phantom is exceedingly rare, for it was later lost in Southeast Asia in a non-combat flying incident on 27 April 1968 (*via Robert F Dorr*)

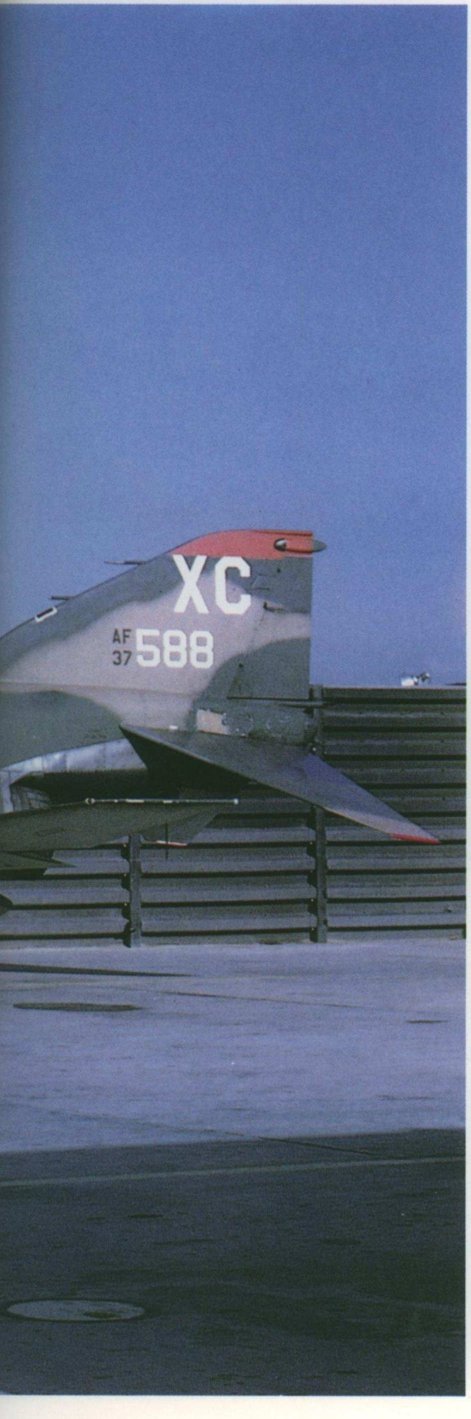
JET
DANGER
INTAKE
RESCUE
PULL
HANDLE
JETTISON
CANOPIES
CAUTION

Marine machine. When the 'Gray Ghosts' of VMFA-531 deployed to Da Nang in April 1965, they brought F-4B Phantom IIs like the ship in the background and men like Lt Col Thomas Miller (left) and CWO John D Cummings. Miller had earlier been 'class desk officer' for the Phantom and had set a world air speed record of 1216 mph (1958 km/h) in September 1960. Cummings eventually became high-hour backseater in the Phantom and scored a MiG-21 kill in September 1972. Better known for providing direct support to its ground combatants in South Vietnam, Marine aviation played a role 'up north' as well, from beginning to end (*John D Cummings*)

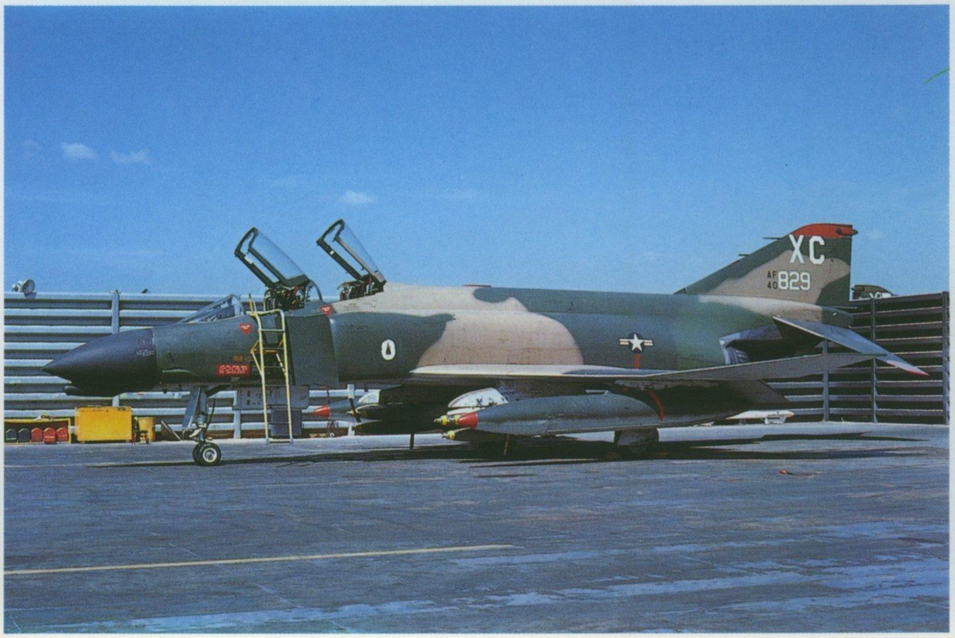


Taken around December 1967 by the pilot of a Kaman HH-43B/F Huskie rescue helicopter, this view at Da Nang evokes memories of the brief period when the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing ('Gunfighters') had tailcodes with a different second letter assigned to each individual airplane. A B- tailcode signified the wing's 480 TFS, a C- code the 390 TFS. No other Air Force unit ever had this system and some pilots like it since they can tell, if properly prebriefed, who the individuals are in a particular aircraft during a mission. Both 64-0749 (CJ) and 64-0838 (BF) survived the war and were still in inventory as late as 31 December 1980, the both serving with the Missouri Air National Guard across the runway from the factory where it was made. PS—That big plane on the right did some work up north, too (*Lt Col Edward Renth*)

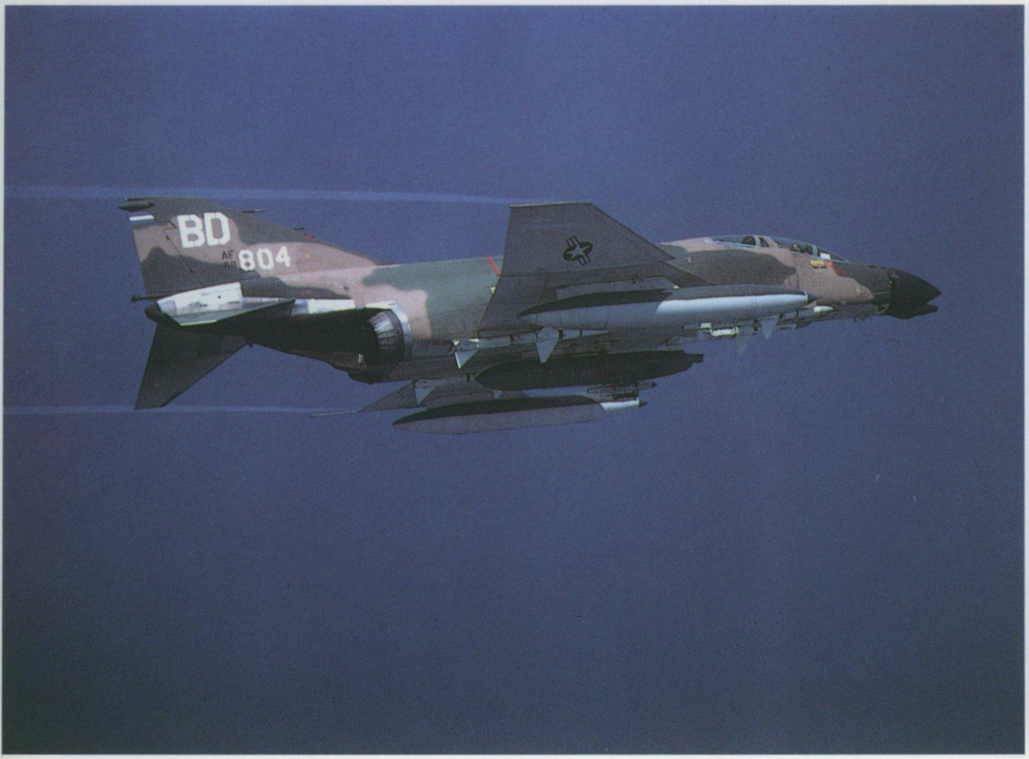

JOLTIN'
JOSIE II
XC



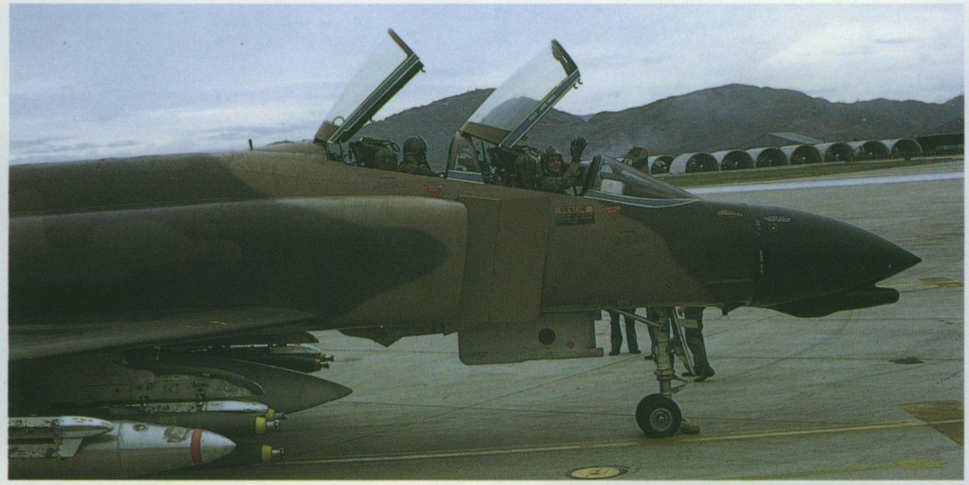
Left *Joltin' Josie II* is an F-4C Phantom II (63-7588) of the XC-coded 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron, part of the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing at Cam Ranh Bay. In 1968, two-letter tailcodes were still new and one pilot wondered if the XC resulted from the wing doing so much 'cross-country' flying, mostly up north. The Cam Ranh-based Phantoms were perhaps the least publicized among the Air Force 'Double Uglies' which flew repeatedly up to Hanoi (*Richard Kamm*)



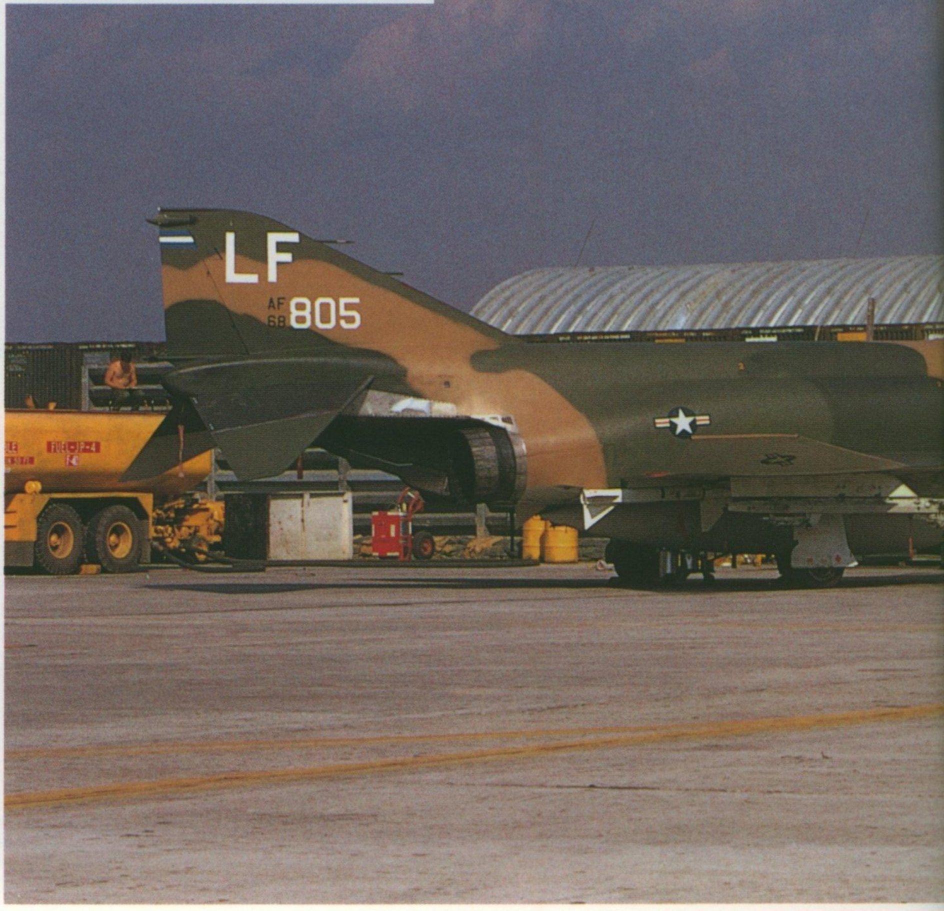
Above This Phantom II of the XC-coded 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron, part of the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing, is already a MiG killer but the folks at Cam Ranh Bay in 1968 don't seem to know. In 1966–67 it served at Ubon and was the aircraft in which Col Robin Olds scored two of his four MiG kills. 64–0829 has since been preserved for history and is on display at the US Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio (*Richard Kamm*)



Walt Kross took these spectacular views on a December 1967 combat mission against North Vietnam as a young F-4D Phantom II aircraft commander with the 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron, part of the Da Nang-based 366th Tactical Fighter Wing ('Gunfighters'). This was early in the history of two-letter tail codes, and the Da Nang Phantoms had individual codes, one squadron's beginning A, one with B, and each with a different second letter. Blue canopy rails are noteworthy. The photographer is the author of a novel about combat operations near Hanoi entitled *Splash One* (*Major General Walt Kross*)

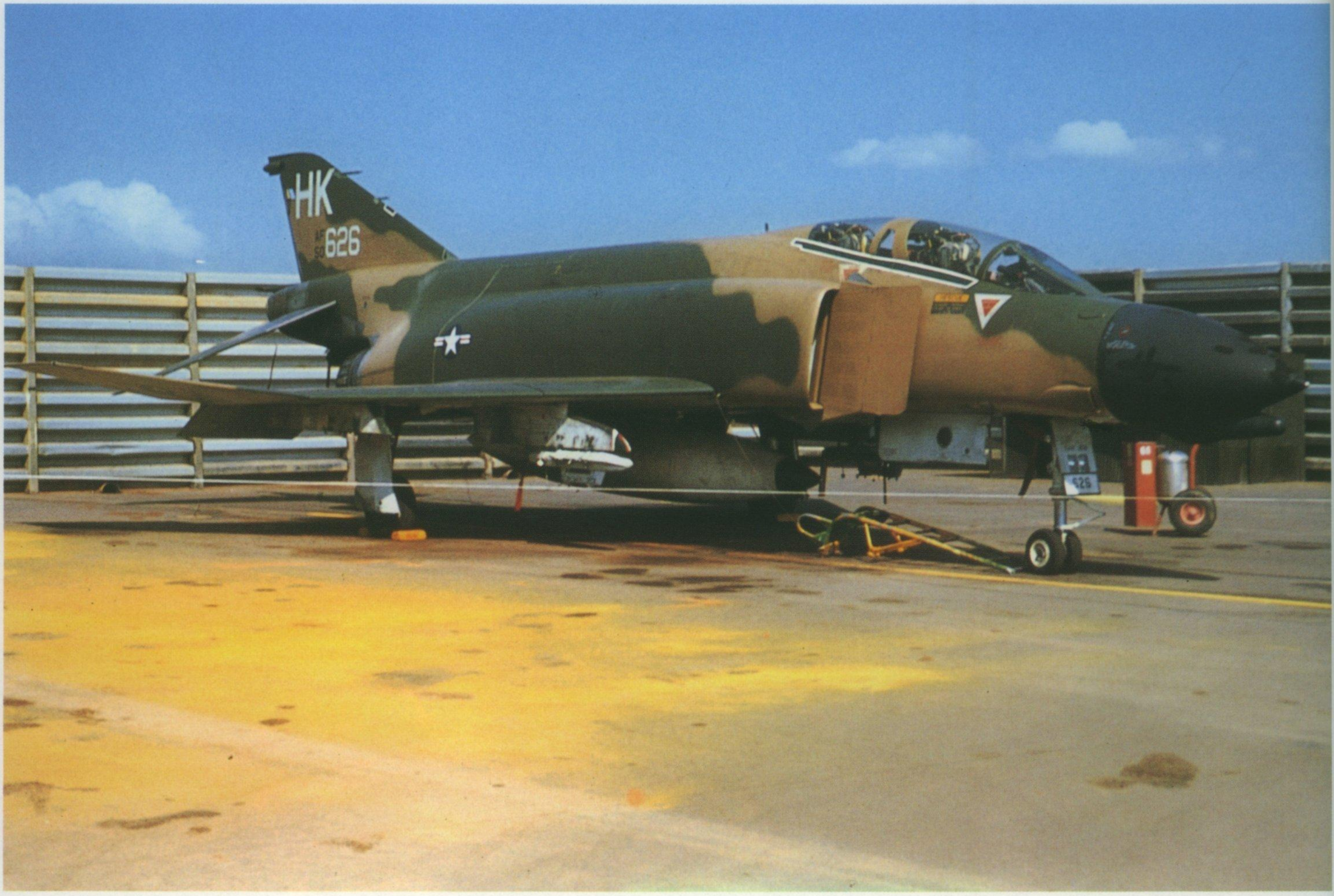


Above Heading out. This Da Nang-based F-4D Phantom II of the 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron is bound for Hanoi in 1967 carrying napalm on the outboard weapons stations and 500-lb (227-kg) Mark 82 bombs with Snakeye high-drag fins. Not many pilots wore helmets with toned-down colours during the Vietnam conflict but the practice has since become standard (*Ken Smith*)

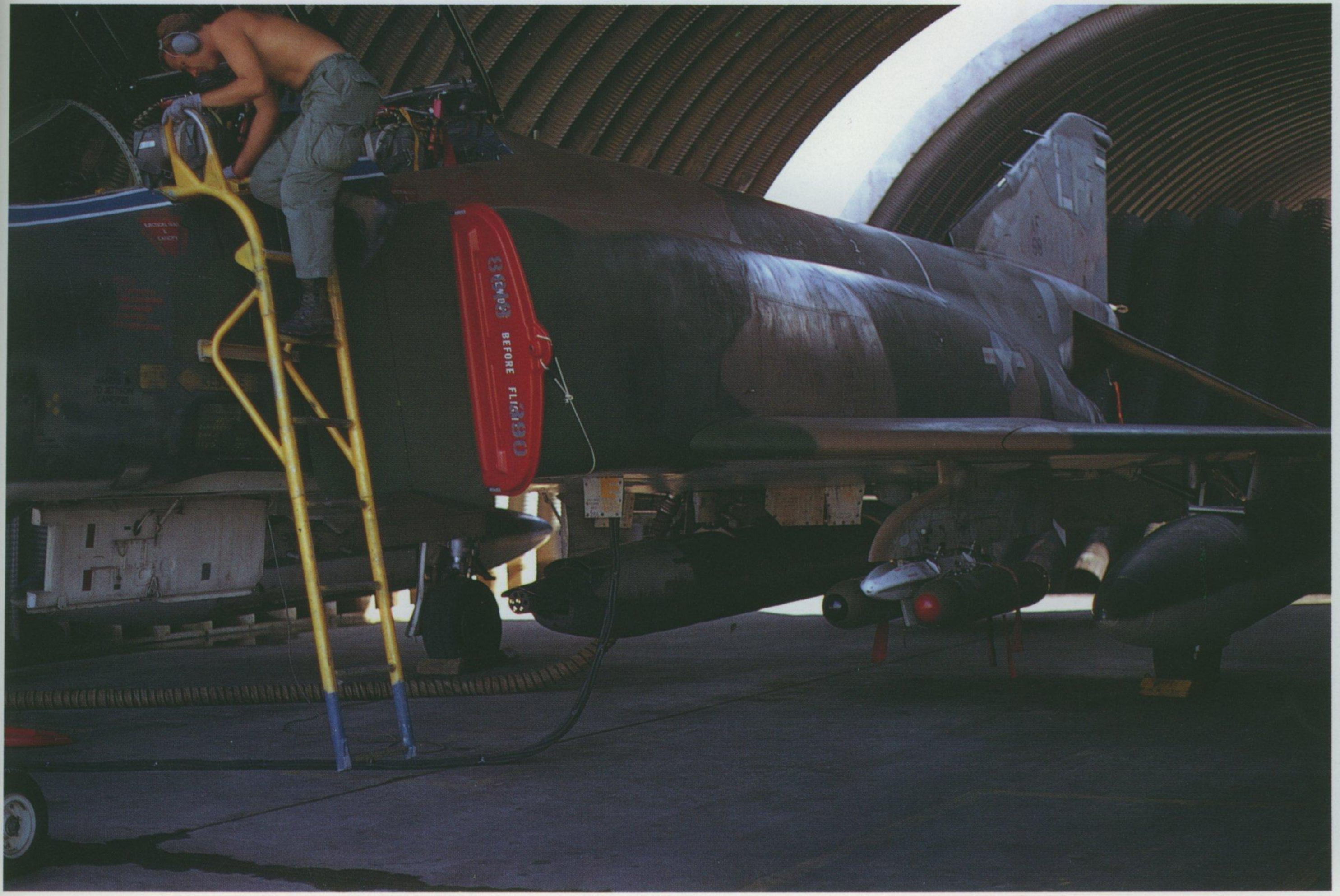


Right F-4D Phantom II fighters of the 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron (LF tailcode), part of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing's 'Gunfighters' at Da Nang airbase in South Vietnam. The F-4D was optimized for the fighter-bomber mission but quickly found itself pitted in air combat against Hanoi's MiG-17s and MiG-21s. MiG pilots sought to catch American fighter-bombers whilst burdened with ordnance, and to 'hit and git'. If they didn't shoot down a Phantom or Thud, they might at least force the American to jettison his bombs short of his target (*Ken Smith*)

LF
AF
67
730

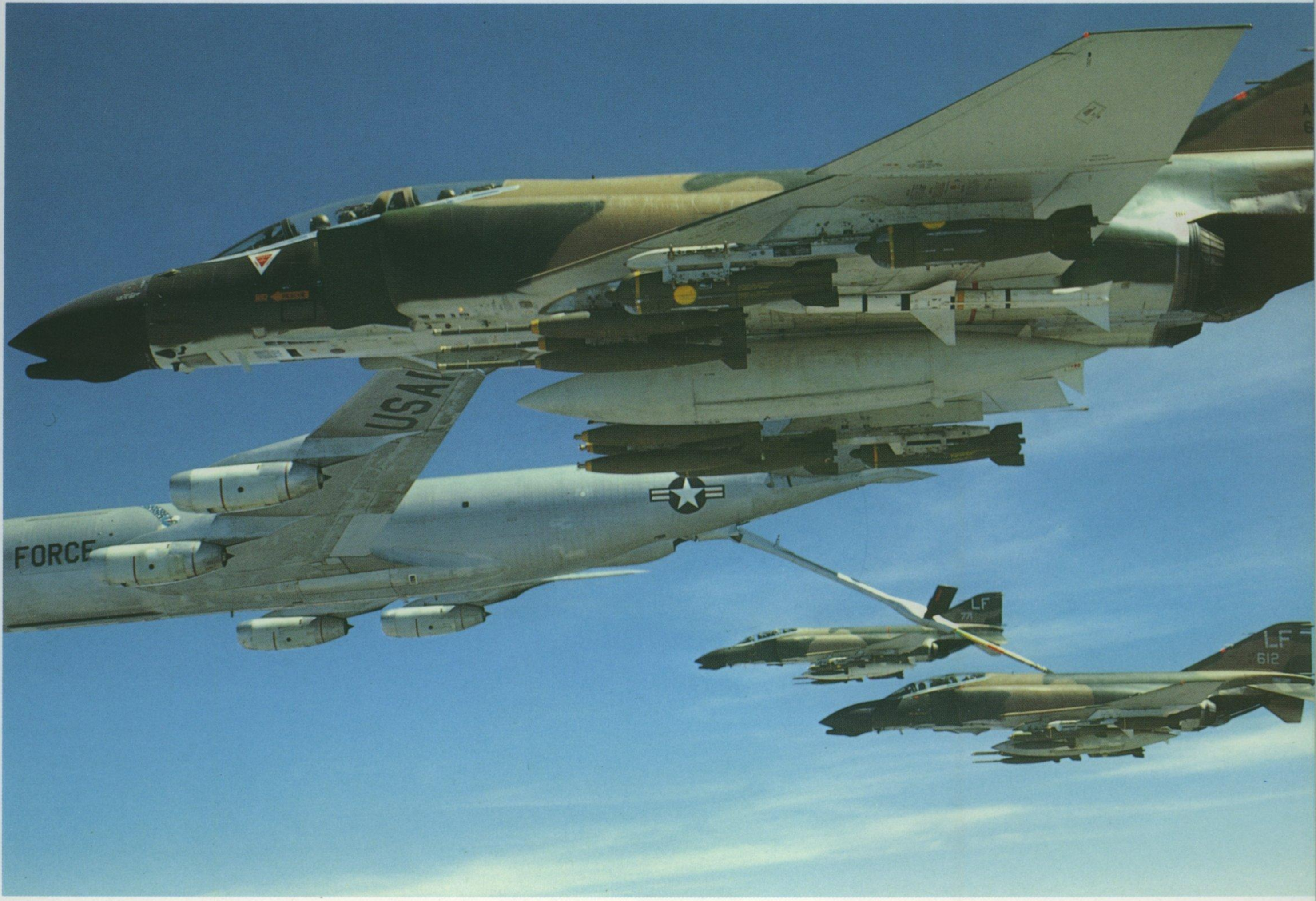


The F-4D version of the fabled Phantom II came along when the Air Force wanted to optimize a fighter, developed initially for fleet air defence, for the kind of gruelling air-to-ground work required by the Vietnam conflict—although D models also fought MiGs and prevailed over many of them. F-4D Phantom (65-0626) of the 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron, part of the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing, is roped off at Phu Cat, South Vietnam, in 1970 (*via Robert F Dorr*)



Extremely rare view of a 'Stormy FAC' (forward air control) F-4D Phantom II at Da Nang with a centreline-mounted SUU-23 gun pod housing a 20-mm Vulcan cannon and marker flares. 'Stormy' pilots of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing had the ultimate FAC mission, locating and identifying targets at low level and high speed. The effectiveness of the mission has been debated but it was one of the most dangerous of the war (*Ken Smith*)

LF
AF
50771

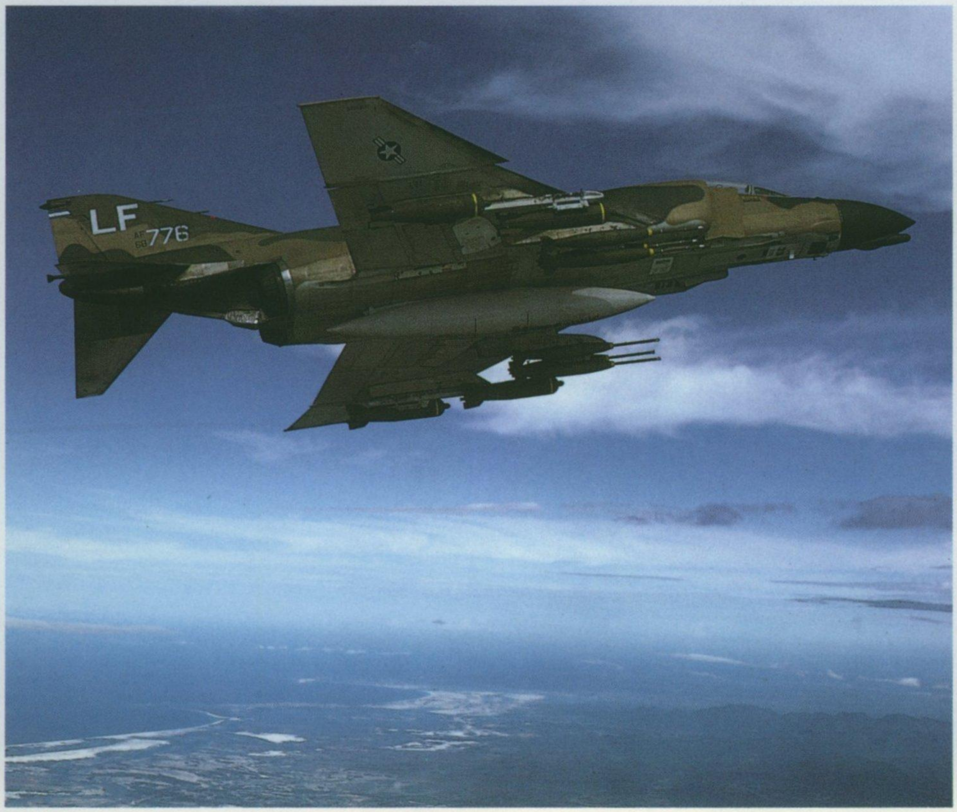


Above The LF tailcode signifies 390th Tactical Fighter Squadron, part of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing, the 'Gunfighters,' flying out of Da Nang. These late-model McDonnell F-4D Phantom IIs from the wing are carrying CBU-24 and CBU-49 cluster bomb units, Mark 82 500-lb (227-kg) bombs, and AIM-7 Sparrow radar-guided missiles while snuggling up under the KC-135 tanker on a February 1970 combat mission (*Dave Scharrett*)

Left Belonging to the 390 TFS/366 TFW, D model Phantom II 65-771, is wearing blue canopy rails but is otherwise unremarkable in its T.O. 1-1-4 camouflage in about February 1970. This Phantom was later listed as an 'operational loss' on 16 April 1972 (*Ken Smith*)

LF
LF
AF
67
730

LF
612

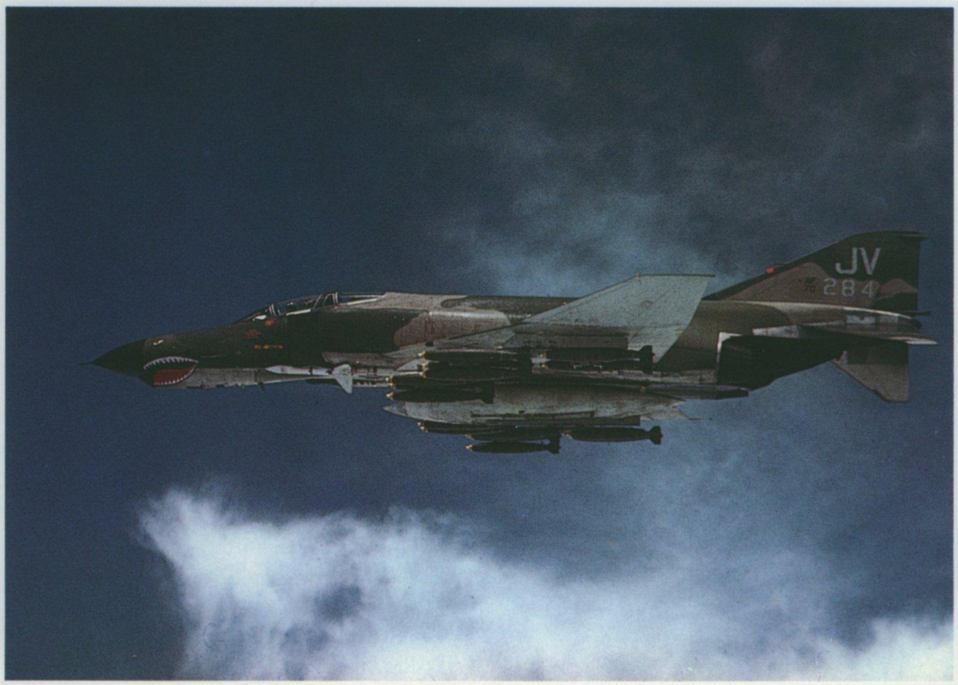


Preceding pages Bomb-laden F-4D Phantom II 66-7730 of the 390 TFS/366 TFW, Da Nang's 'Gunfighters,' flies with friends on a bombing mission in about February 1970. North Vietnam is 'off limits' at this time because of a bombing halt, and these Phantoms may be heading into Laos. Later in the war, 7730 turned up with the 8 TFW, 'Wolfpack' (*Ken Smith*)

Above F-4D Phantom II 66-8776 of the 390 TFW/366TFW shows its under side on a July 1970 combat mission. This Phantom survived the war but was lost on 7 December 1978 while serving with the 52 TFW at Spangdahlem, Germany (*Ken Smith*)

Right When former Convair B-58 Hustler pilot Ken Smith transitioned from a J79-powered bomber to a J79-powered fighter (a highly unusual move), he took this shot of F-4D Phantom II 66-7612 of the 390 TFS/366 TFW flying in combat from Da Nang in about February 1970 (*Ken Smith*)

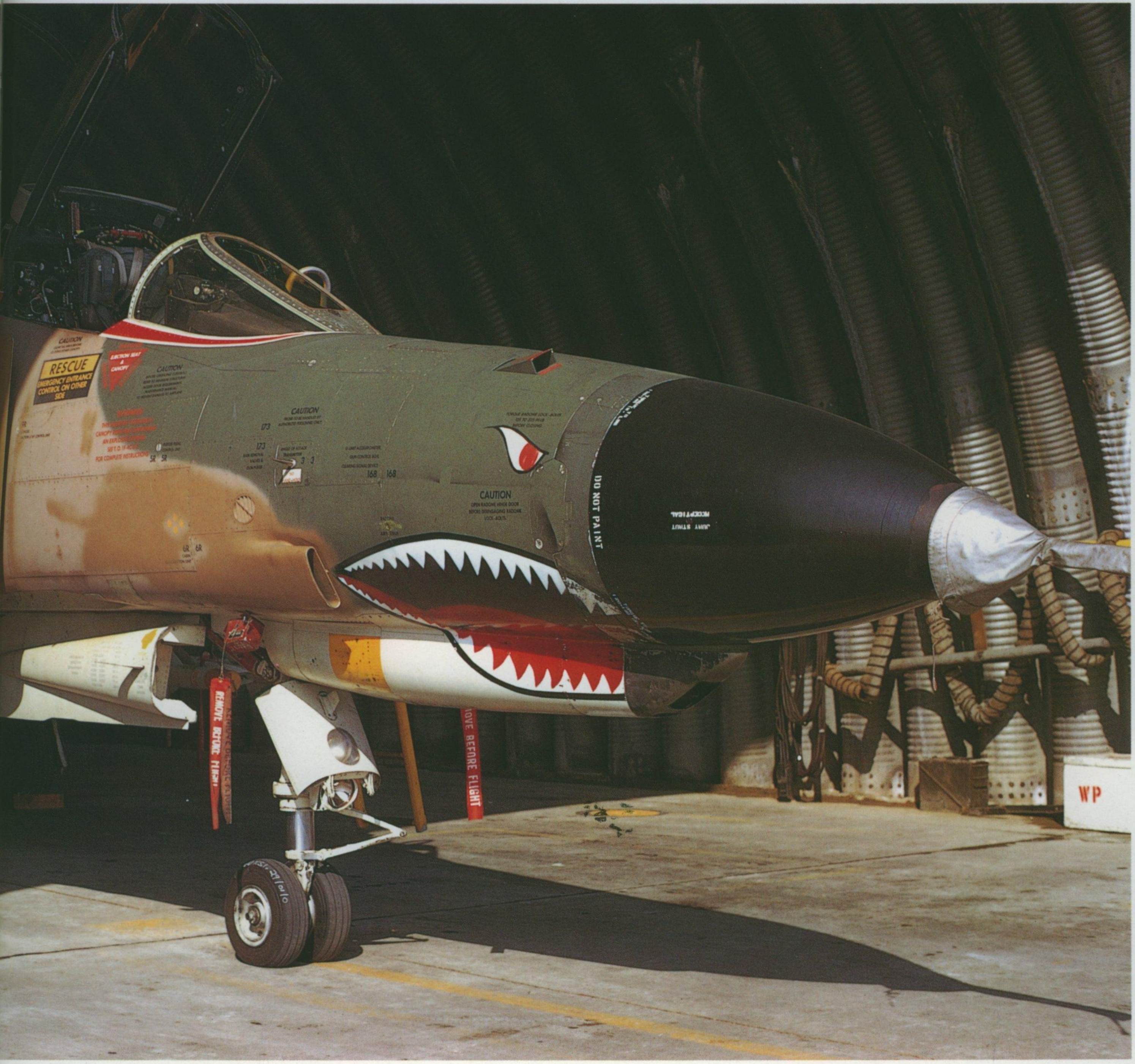
612



REMOVE BEFORE FLIGHT

Right The internal 20-mm M61 Vulcan cannon, so sorely needed on early Phantoms and finally installed on the F-4E model, is shown to good advantage in this view of *Double Ugly* coming out of a hardened aircraft shelter at Da Nang in about February 1970. The shark's teeth began with the Korat-based 469th TFS but soon were adopted, as well, by the Da Nang 390th TFS (LF tailcode), part of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing or 'Gunfighters' (*Ken Smith*)

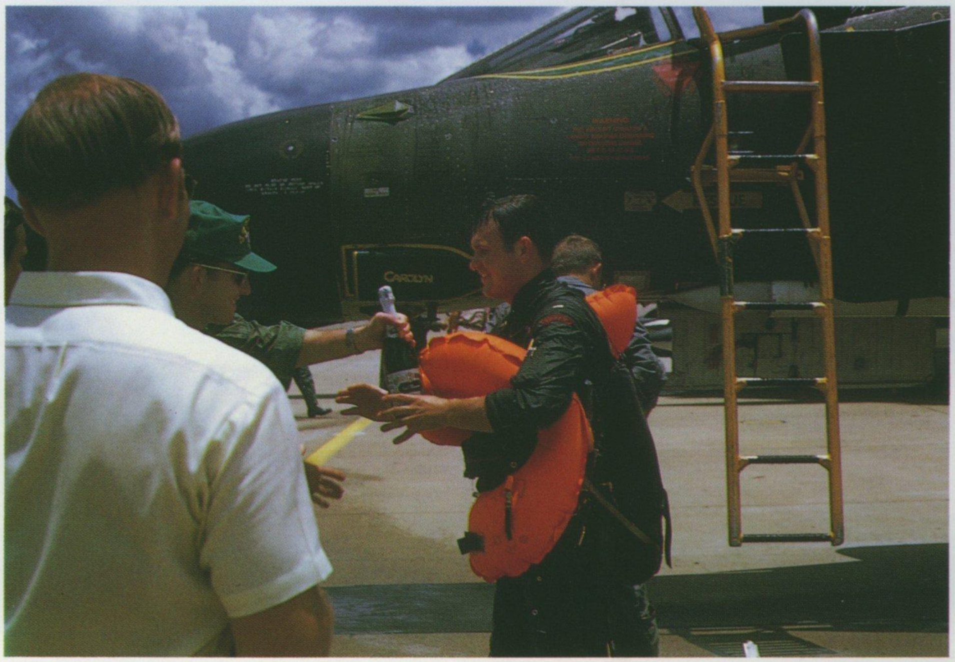
Above The 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron headed up by Lt Col Ed Hillding went to Southeast Asia with the first F-4E Phantom II equipped with internal 20-mm nose cannons, and with painted shark's teeth from the brush of artist Captain Steve Steven. The pilots and back-seaters were fired up to try their new F-4E model against Hanoi's MiGs. But they arrived at Korat to join the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing just as the Rolling Thunder campaign ended and the 1 October 1968 bombing halt went into effect. The Phantoms flew combat missions in Laos, South Vietnam, and limited portions of North Vietnam, but it was to be some time before they actually saw a MiG (*Steve Steven*)


RESCUE
EMERGENCY ENTRANCE CONTROL ON OTHER SIDE
CAUTION
CAUTION
OPEN RADOME HINGE DOOR BEFORE DISENGAGING RADOME LOCK BOLTS
DO NOT PAINT
REMOVE BEFORE FLIGHT
REMOVE BEFORE FLIGHT
WP

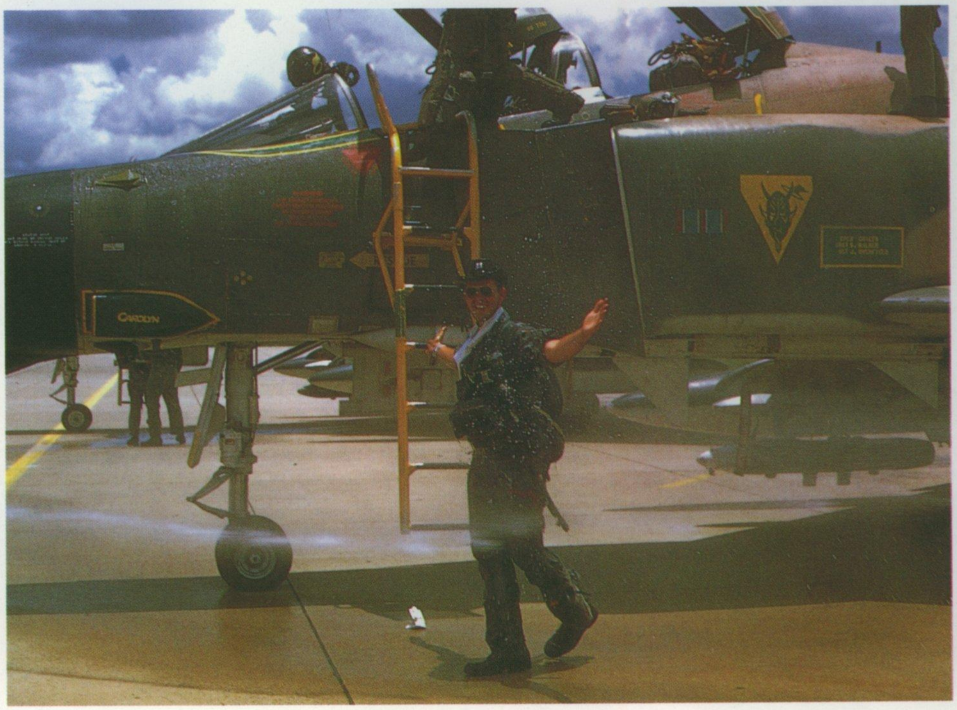
FC
767

FG
767
FG
AF
60
263
767

Preceding page, left F-4E Phantom II 66-0291 refuels from a KC-135A Stratotanker heading back with empty racks from a mission up north. Crew of the Phantom had a roomy cockpit and reasonable visibility but their fighter was never considered very agile. Leading-edge slats were retrofitted to improve manoeuvrability. Rules of engagement (ROE) usually prevented Phantom crews from using their ace in the hole, namely radar-guided Sparrow missiles which could be employed beyond visual range (*via Michael France*)



Page 95, 96 & 97 Captains Gale Page (front seat) and Steve Mosier, both pilots, have just completed 100 combat missions over North Vietnam in F-4D Phantom 66-7727 (FG tailcode), *Carolyn* of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, or 'Wolfpack's,' 433rd Tactical Fighter Squadron. It's 1968 at Ubon, Thailand, and signal smoke is being unleashed to celebrate the completion of the 100 trips up north. Page and Mosier move from airplane to champagne (*Mosier*)

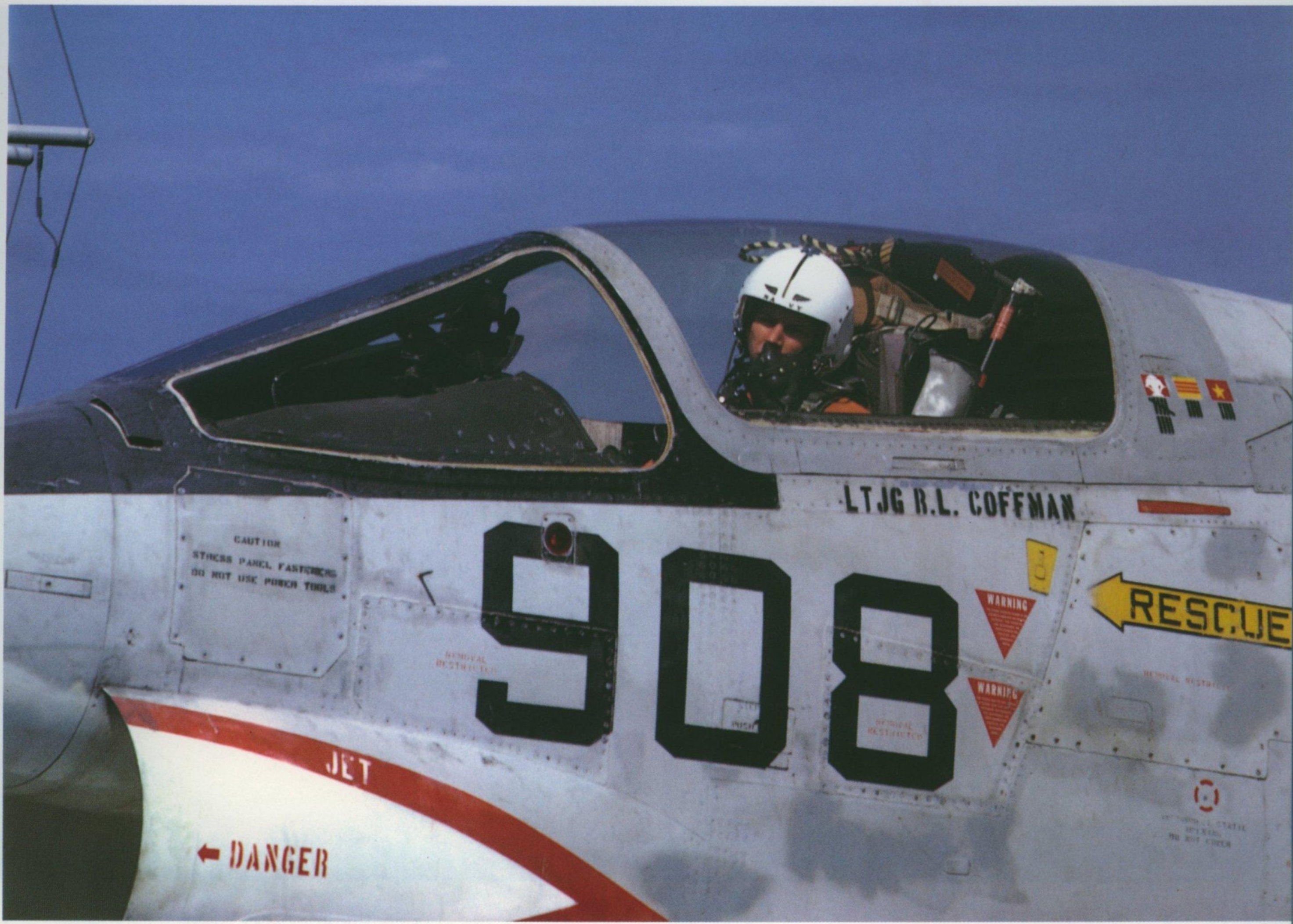


NP
147021
NAVY
VF-24
445
104

Crusaders and Corsairs

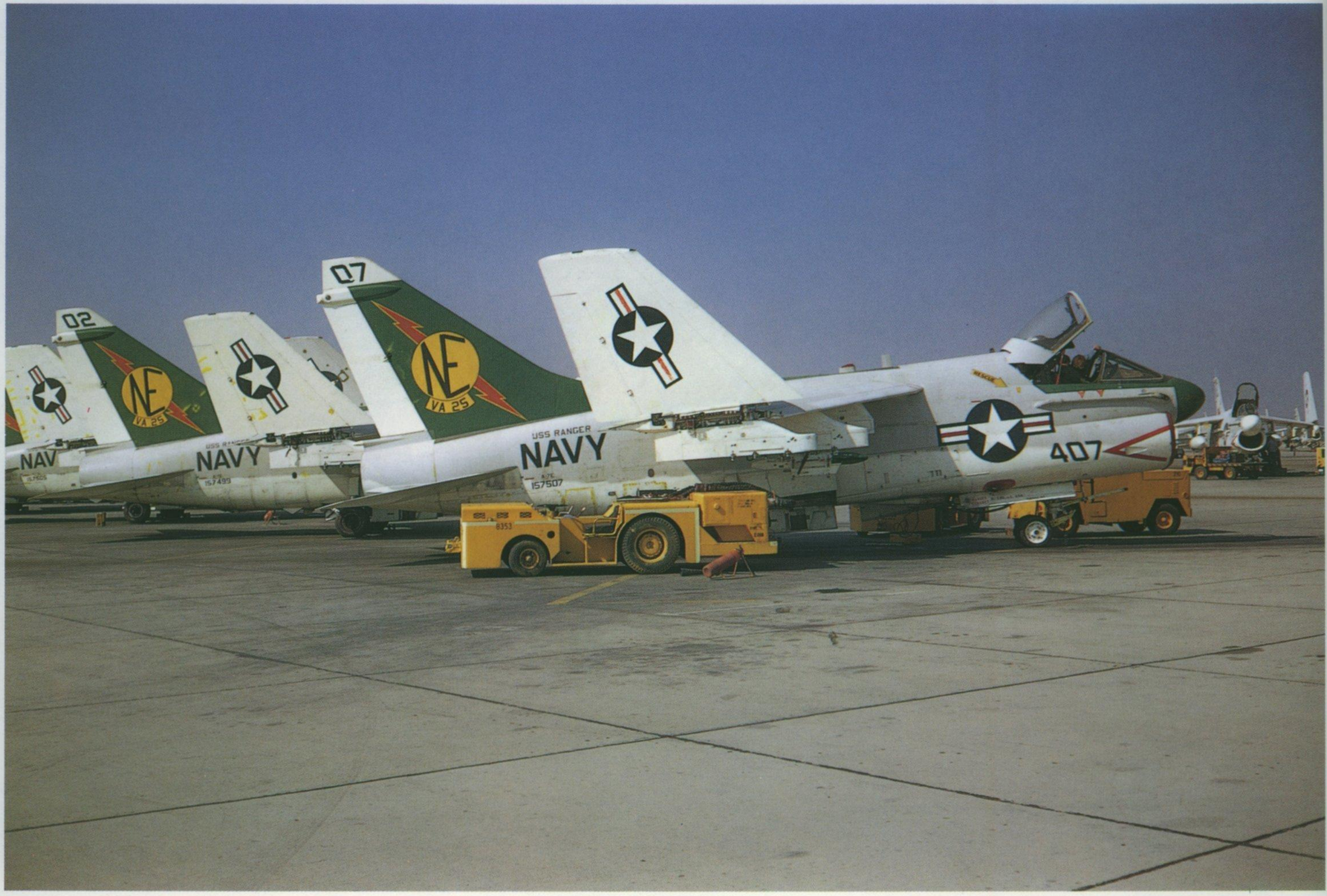
Heading for war. Vought F-8 Crusader 147021 (foreground) of the 'Fighting Renegades' of VF-24 is ready for action on the deck of USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA-31) as the aircraft carrier passes the *Arizona* memorial at Pearl Harbor in April 1967. 'Renegades' went on to give a good account of themselves against Hanoi's MiGs (*Ron Lord*)

AJ
147047
101
NAVY
VF 661
AJ
147049
100
NAVY
VF 661
AJ
148657
102
NAVY
VF 661
AJ
148677
110
NAVY
VF 661

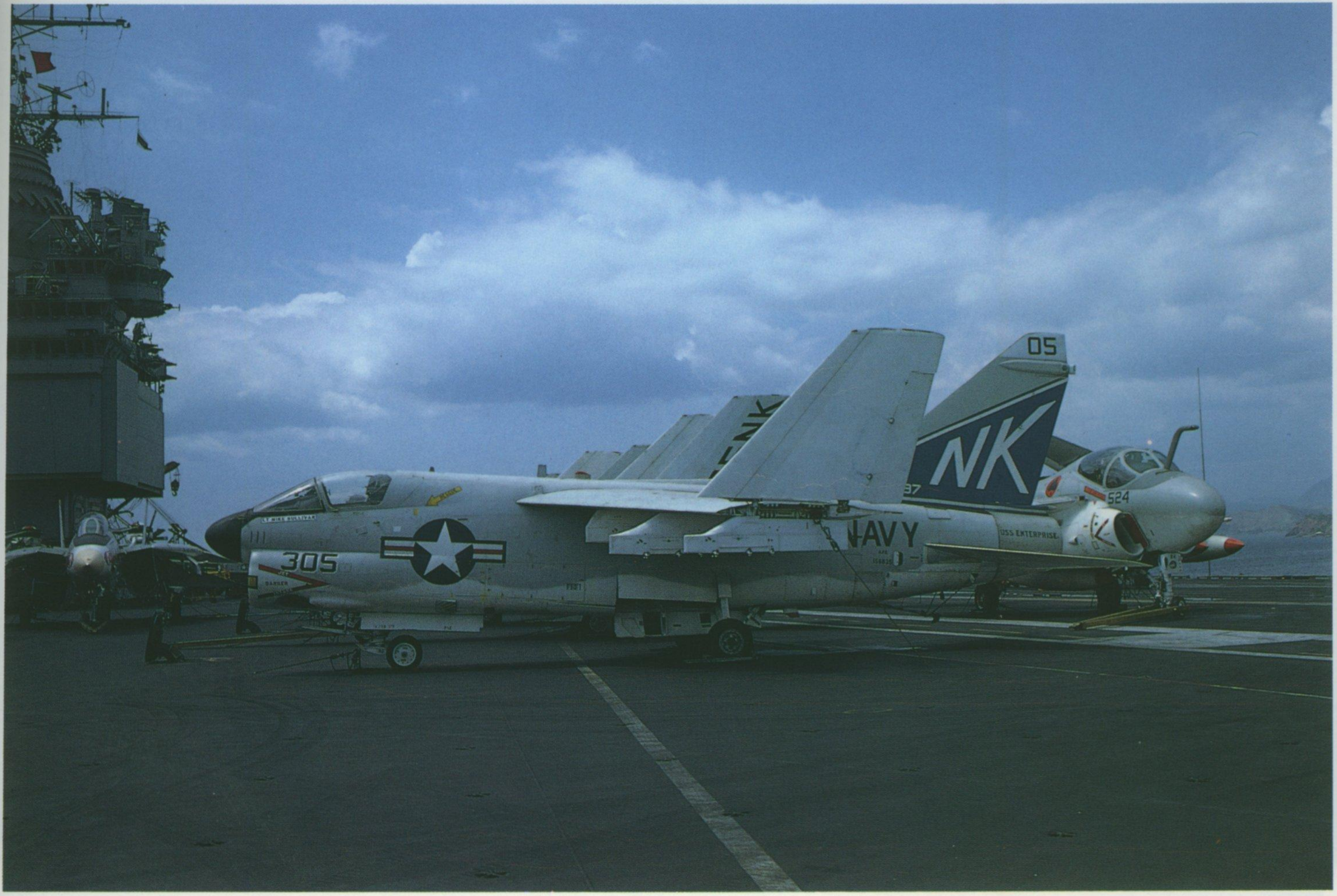

LTJG R.L. COFFMAN
CAUTION
STRESS PANEL FASTENERS
DO NOT USE POWER TOOLS
908
WARNING
WARNING
RESCUE
JET
DANGER

Left Rarely depicted are the colours of VF-661, a Reserve F-8 Crusader squadron which was called to active duty during the Vietnam conflict (*J C Black*)

Above VP-63 RF-8A Crusader photo-recce jock readies himself for a high-speed reconnaissance mission in the Hanoi region, flying from the deck of USS *Hancock* (CVA-10) during early days in 1965. Located behind pilot, flags of Laos, South Vietnam and North Vietnam with hash marks underneath each are an unusual way of keeping score on combat missions completed (*Merrill Worthington*)

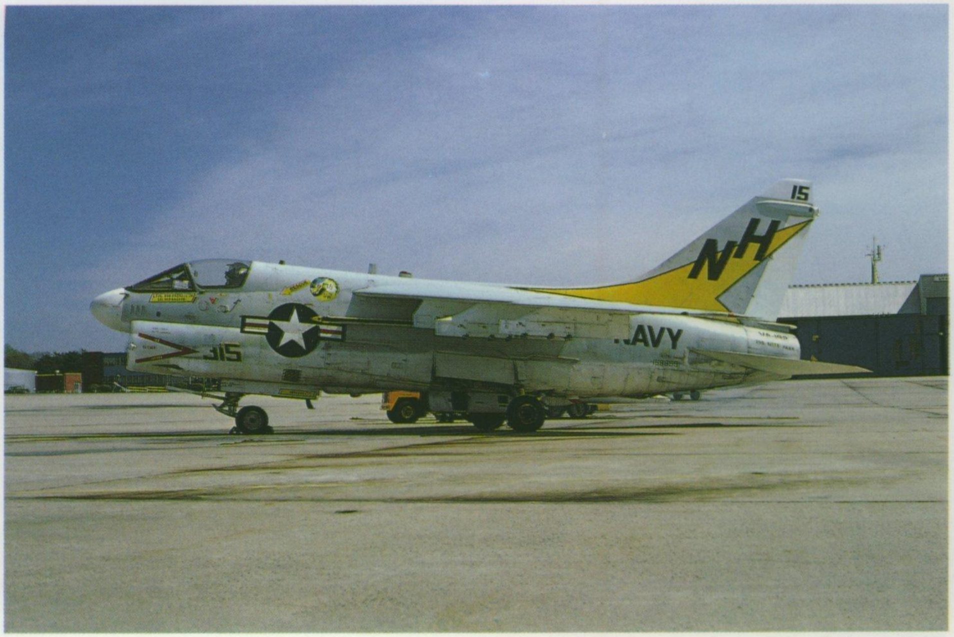

02
NAV
NAVY
157499
07
NE
VA 25
USS RANGER
NAVY
157507
407

VA-25 'Fist of the Fleet' was one of the less-publicized Corsair II squadrons during the ongoing festivities over Hanoi, but had some of the more colourful markings. 'Fist' A-7E Bureau No 157507 is seen shorebound at the west coast home of light attack aviation, NAS Lemoore, California, in November 1971, a few months before Linebacker II operations around Hanoi (*Harrison Rued*)



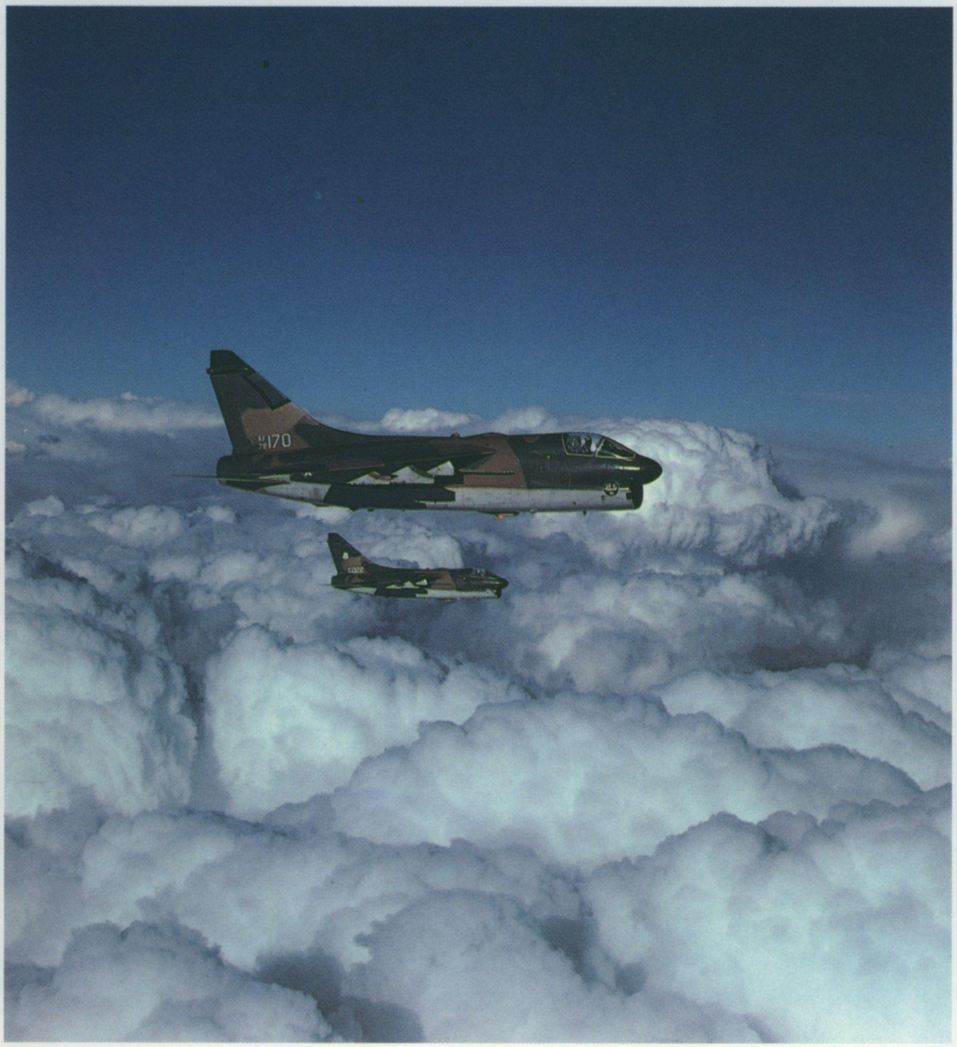
Corsairs and Intruders on the deck of USS *Enterprise* (CVAN-65) en route to Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of Saigon, in April 1975. The Vought A-7 Corsair II was a kind of 'be everywhere, do everything' workhorse which had greater range and load-carrying capability, if not quite the same aircrew affection, as the A-4 Skyhawk it replaced (*USN*)

8007
VA-12
USS
INDEPENDENCE
NAVY
RESCUE
513



Left VA-12 flew both Skyhawks and Corsairs during the Vietnam years when a sensitive few made the squadron change its nickname from 'Ubangis' to 'Clinchers.' USS *Independence* (CVA-62) was another east coast/Atlantic Fleet carrier which, under a 'fair share' effort, completed combat cruises in Vietnamese waters. A-7E Bureau No 158007 is ready for launch from *Indy*'s flight deck (*via Robert F Dorr*)

Above VA-192, the 'Golden Dragons,' joined forces with VA-195 'Dam Busters' to carry off some of the heaviest fighting in 1972, including the mining of Haiphong harbour on 8 May. A-7E Corsair II 158659 was a veteran of these operations, still wearing wartime markings, during a postwar visit to NAS Oceana, Virginia (*Michael F Henning*)

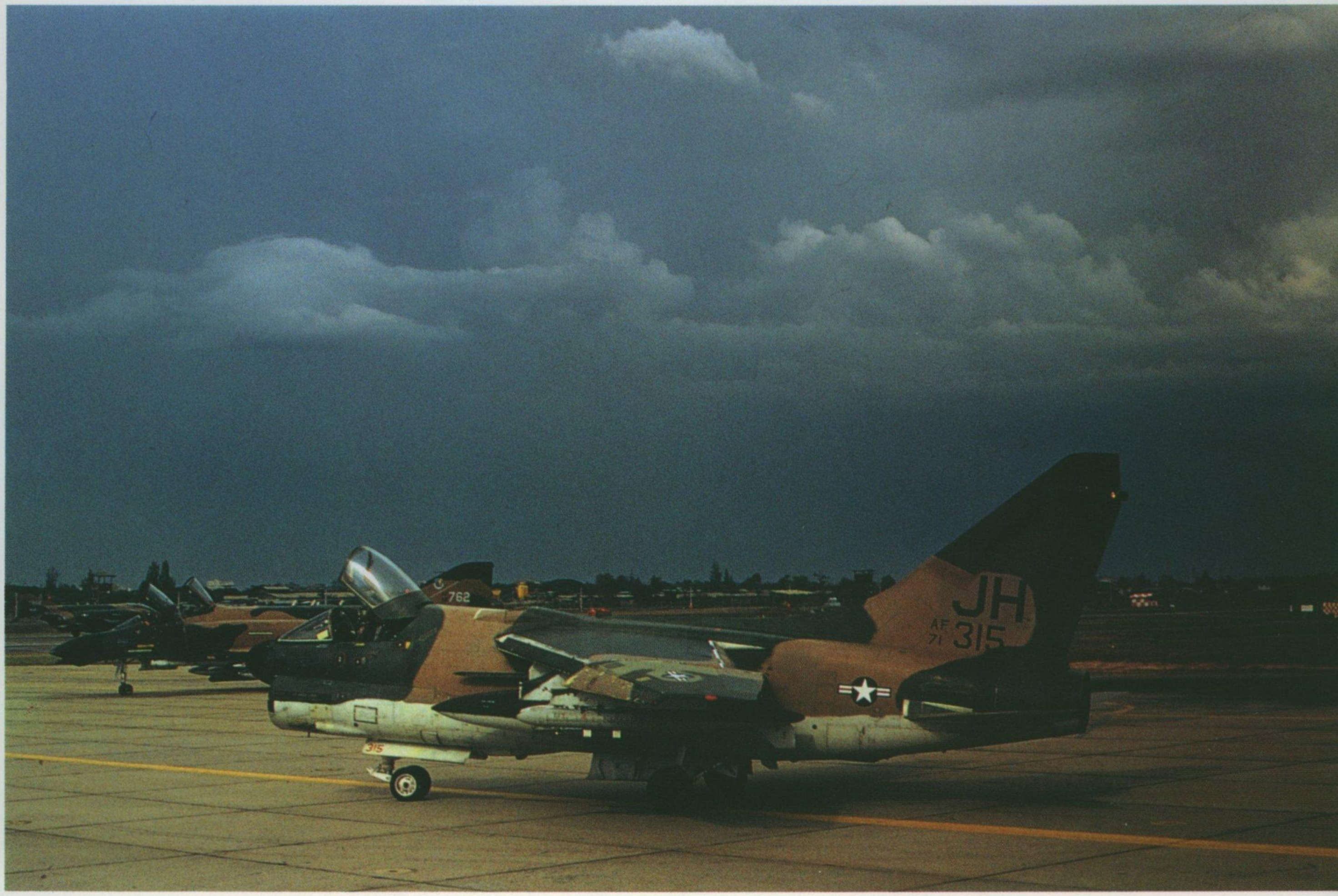


Right The Vought A-7E Corsair II took on an added duty as a temporary tanker, with installation of a Douglas D-204 'buddy' refuelling pod, which could be carried by an aircraft without degrading its combat capability. Without enough full-time tankers—the KA-3 Skywarriors and KA-6D Intruders which could perform no other mission—carrier air wing commanders in the Gulf of Tonkin often employed the A-7E on refuelling missions (*USN*)

Above Vought A-7Ds in flight just before the end of hostilities in Southeast Asia. The Corsair introduced a new standard of accuracy to bombing in the final days of the Vietnam conflict (*via Robert F Dorr*)

AG
NAVY
VA-66

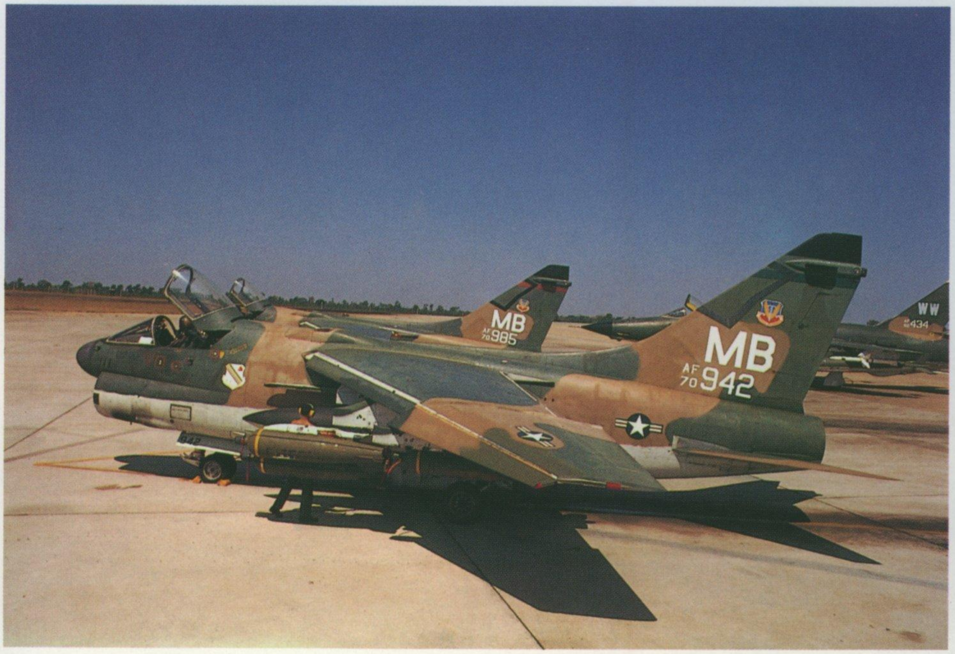
JH
AF 332
332



Left The A-7D followed a tradition established by the F-4 Phantom II, with the US Air Force adopting a design conceived originally as a carrier-based combat aircraft for the Navy. Air Force pilots called it the SLUF, which stood for (more or less) Short Little Ugly Fellow. This 3rd TFS A-7D is seen in a revetment at Korat in 1975 (*George Bracken*)

Above The 3rd Tactical Fighter Squadron (JH tailcode) was created to give local commanders their own operational A-7D unit in the combat theatre. 3 TFS aircraft like this A-7D (73-0315), seen at Korat in July 1975, were the first American combat aircraft to wear black tail codes instead of white. They participated in the evacuation of Saigon in April 1975 and the rescue of the crew of the merchant vessel *Mayaguez* in May (*George Bracken*)

PILOT COL. FRED A. HAEFFNER
ARMAMENT



Left The only A-7D ever to be adorned with MiG kill symbols was 71-0355 which belonged to Col Fred Haeffner when he served with the 355 TFW in 1972. Haeffner did not shoot down any MiG while flying the SLUF, however. His one firm kill and one probable were achieved while piloting an F-4 Phantom II (*via Robert F Dorr*)

Above The Vought A-7D joined the Air Force later in the Vietnam conflict but became, by October 1972, one of the principal striking weapons in the region around Hanoi. In addition, the A-7D took over from the Douglas A-1 Skyraider the chore of escorting rescue forces up north. This A-7D with full bombload belongs to the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing, operating from Korat, Thailand in January 1973, the final month of American participation in the war (*USAF*)

Overleaf The Vought A-7D, never officially given the nickname Corsair II, was late getting into action in US Air Force markings. The 354th Tactical Fighter Wing from Myrtle Beach AFB, South Carolina deployed to Korat in late 1972 and the wing's aircraft 71-304 is seen here, during air refuelling while en route to the war zone. The A-7D replaced the A-1 Skyraider in the 'Sandy' role, guarding air rescue operations (*Nelson via Isham*)

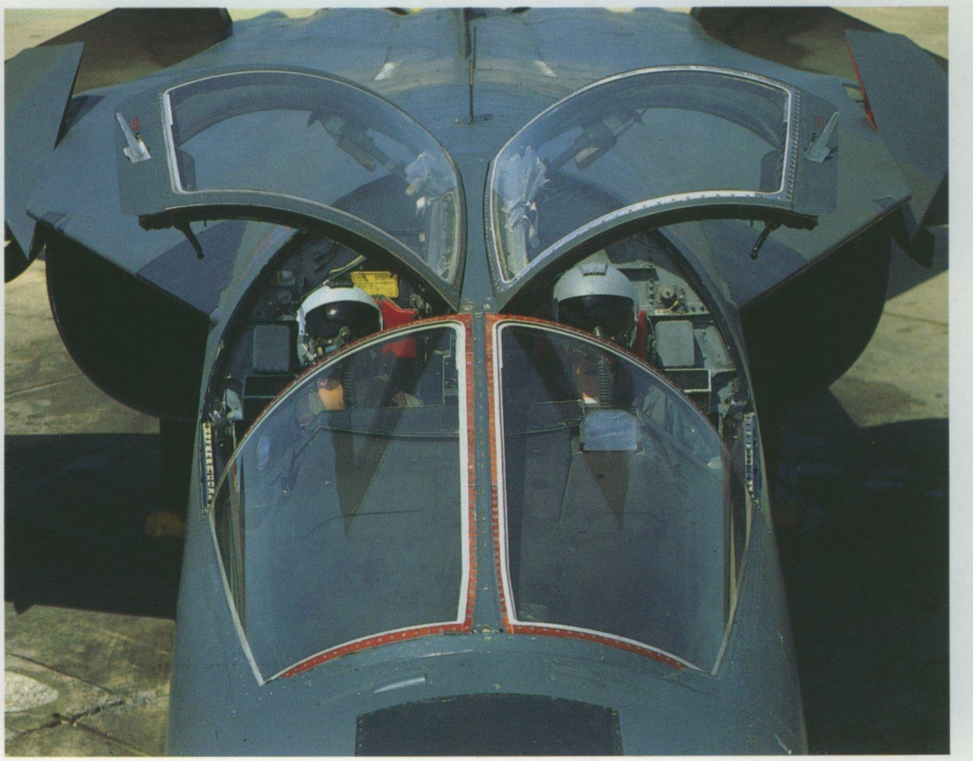
MB
304

RESCUE

They Also Served

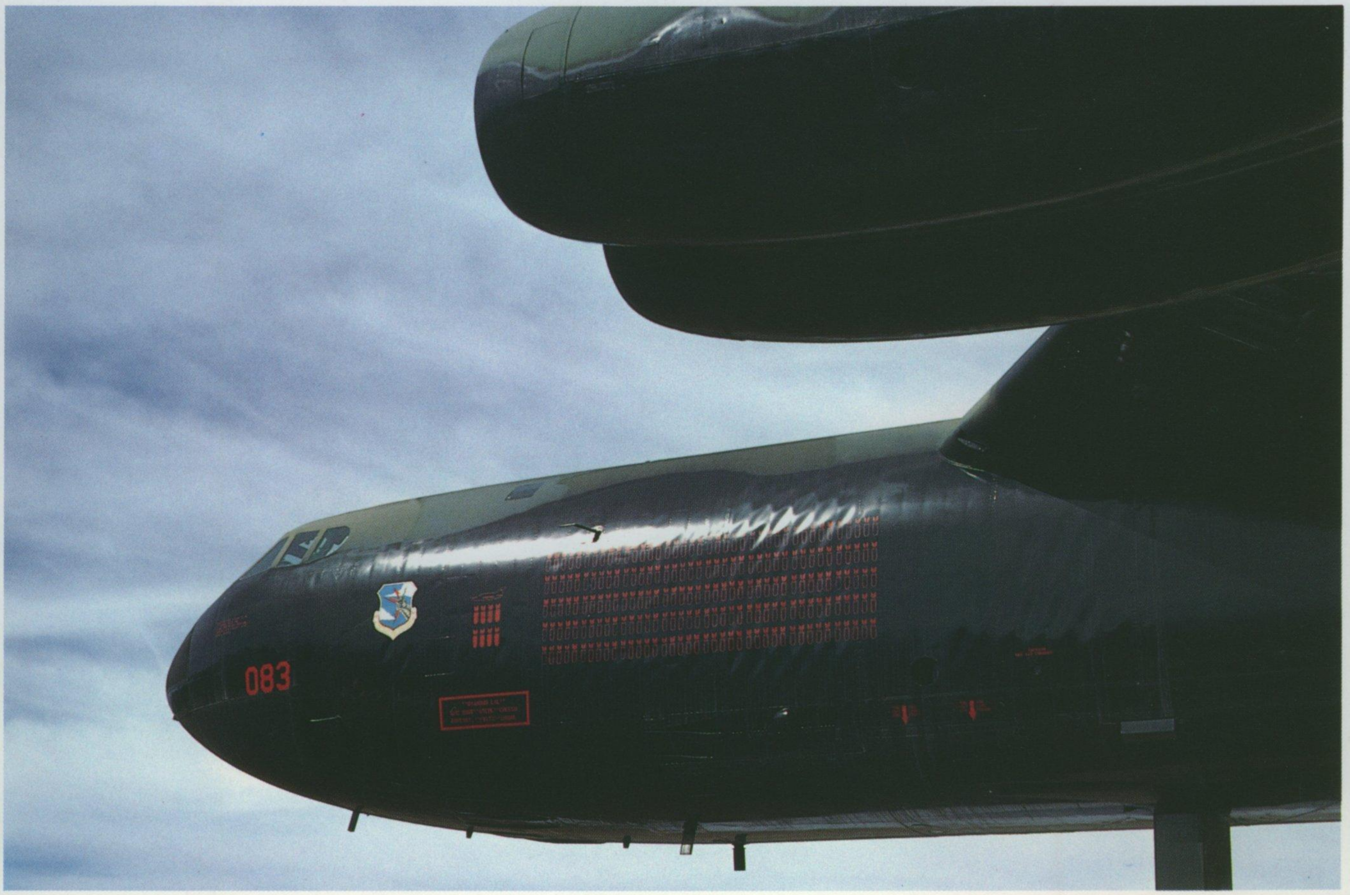
Left The fastest combat aircraft of the Vietnam conflict was not a Phantom or a MiG but the RF-101C Voodoo, flown in the region near Hanoi by reconnaissance pilots who were supposedly 'alone, unarmed and unafraid,' and who routinely joked that two out of three wasn't bad. The RF-101C was the first American aircraft in the war, operating from Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airfield as early as January 1960. This RF-101C of the 20th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 'Green Pythons,' is seen on the ramp at Udorn, Thailand during a period of intense combat operations against North Vietnam in December 1967 (*John Bull Stirling*)

Below The crew of the F-111A enjoyed spacious, side-by-side accommodation inside an ejection capsule, so that the weapons systems officer, instead of being a GIB ('guy in back') was referred to as a YOT ('you over there'). F-111As of the 429th Tactical Fighter Squadron 'Black Falcons' deployed to Taklhli RTAB, Thailand in 1972 under Operation Constant Guard V (*USAF*)



HG
AF 67 093

7th BOMBARDMENT WING
083

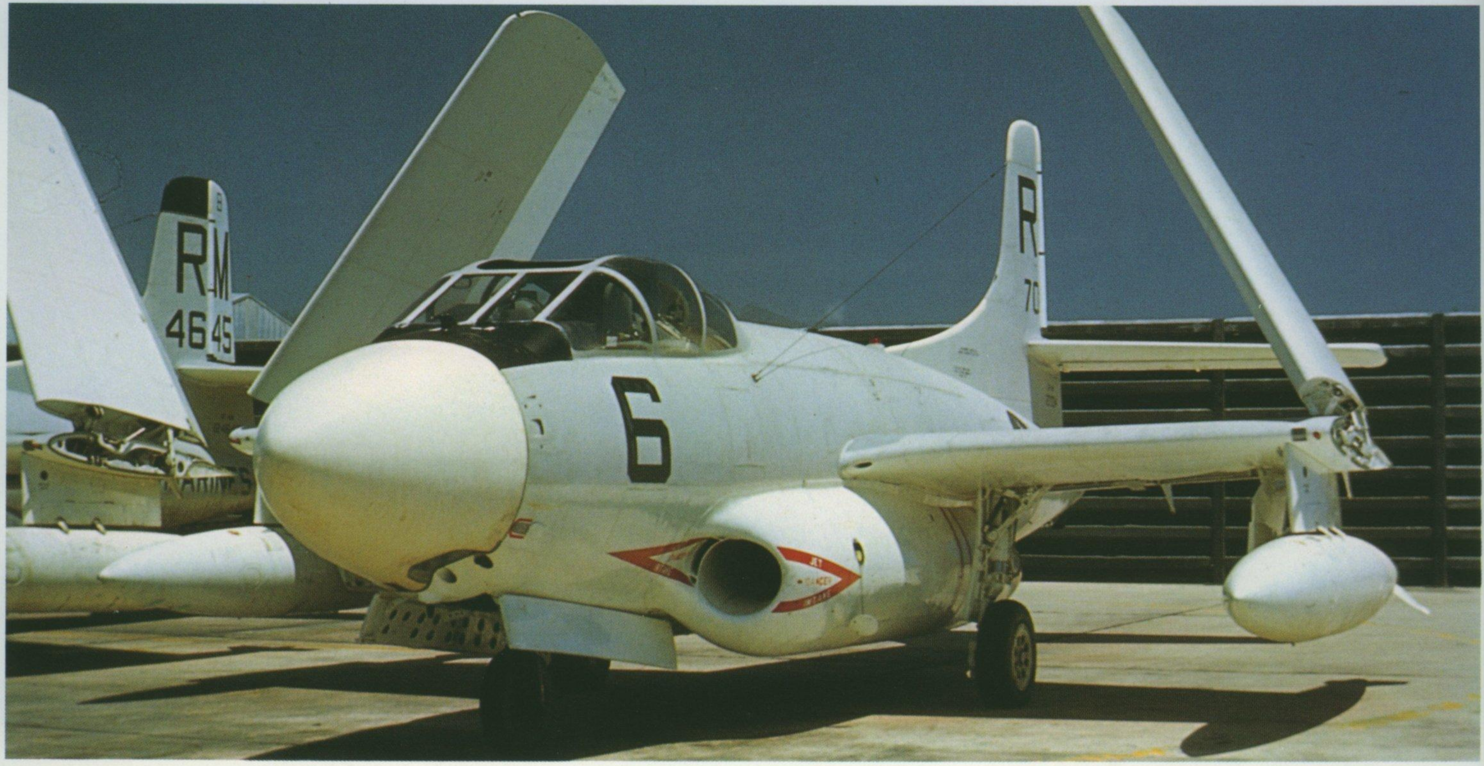


Boeing B-52D Stratofortress 55-0083, now on display at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, was one of two heavy bombers which shot down MiGs during the December 1972 fighting over Hanoi. On Christmas Eve, this bomber's tail gunner shot down a MiG-21 during a night mission. Just discernible on the bomber's right side along with hash marks for numerous combat missions, behind the SAC badge, is a side-view silhouette of a MiG-21 to signify the 'kill' (*Robert F Dorr*)

Preceding pages The General Dynamics F-111A, once billed as the US Air Force's future 'fighter' of the 1960s and 1970s, became a superb low-level bomber after a trouble-prone deployment in 1968, and returned to the skies around Hanoi in 1972 as one of the most effective weapons in the US arsenal. 'Aardvark' 67-093 of the 430th Tactical Fighter Squadron, part of the 347th Tactical Fighter Wing at Korat, flies a combat mission over Cambodia in 1973 following the end of American bombing in Vietnam (*Arnie Franklin*)

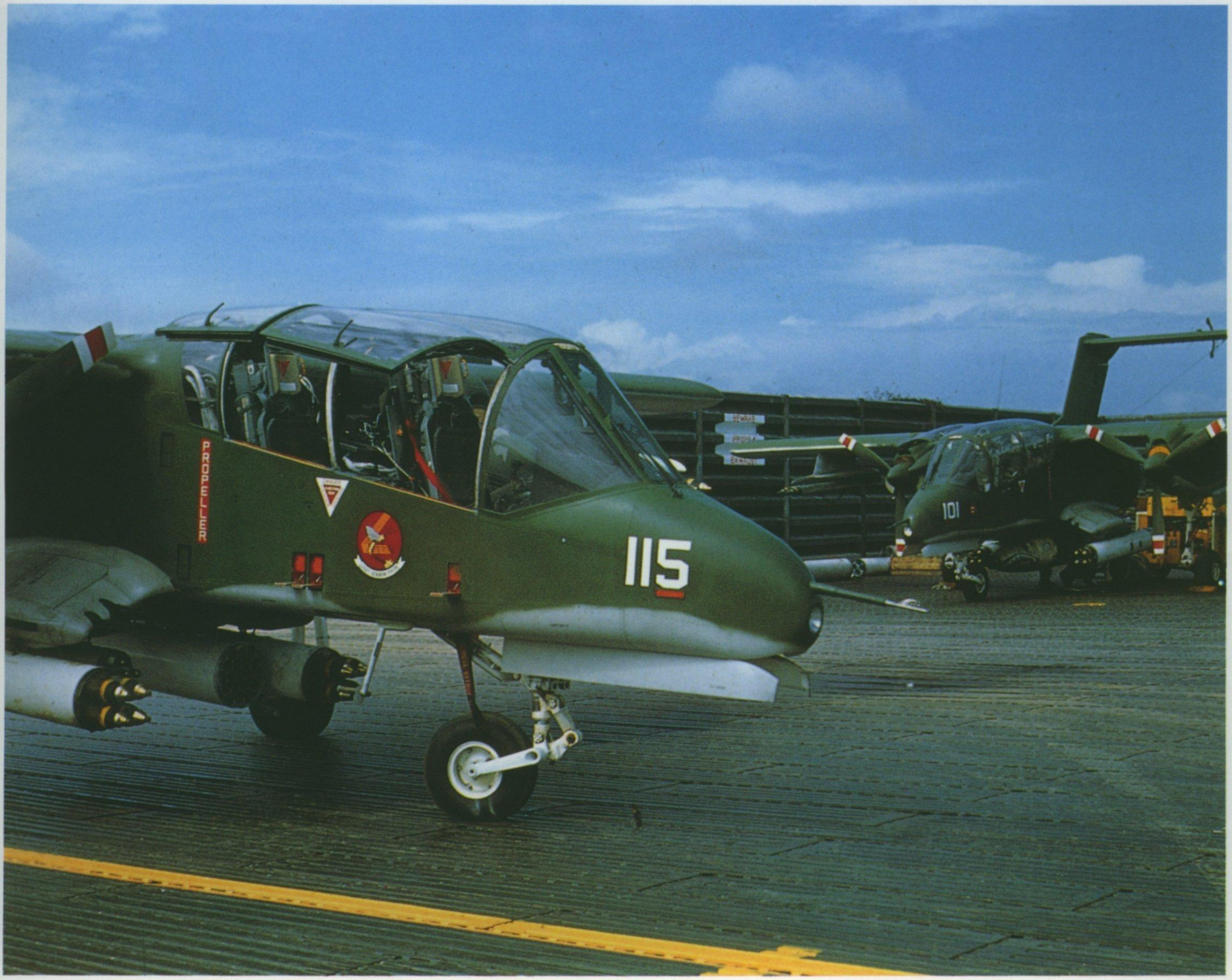
629

60628



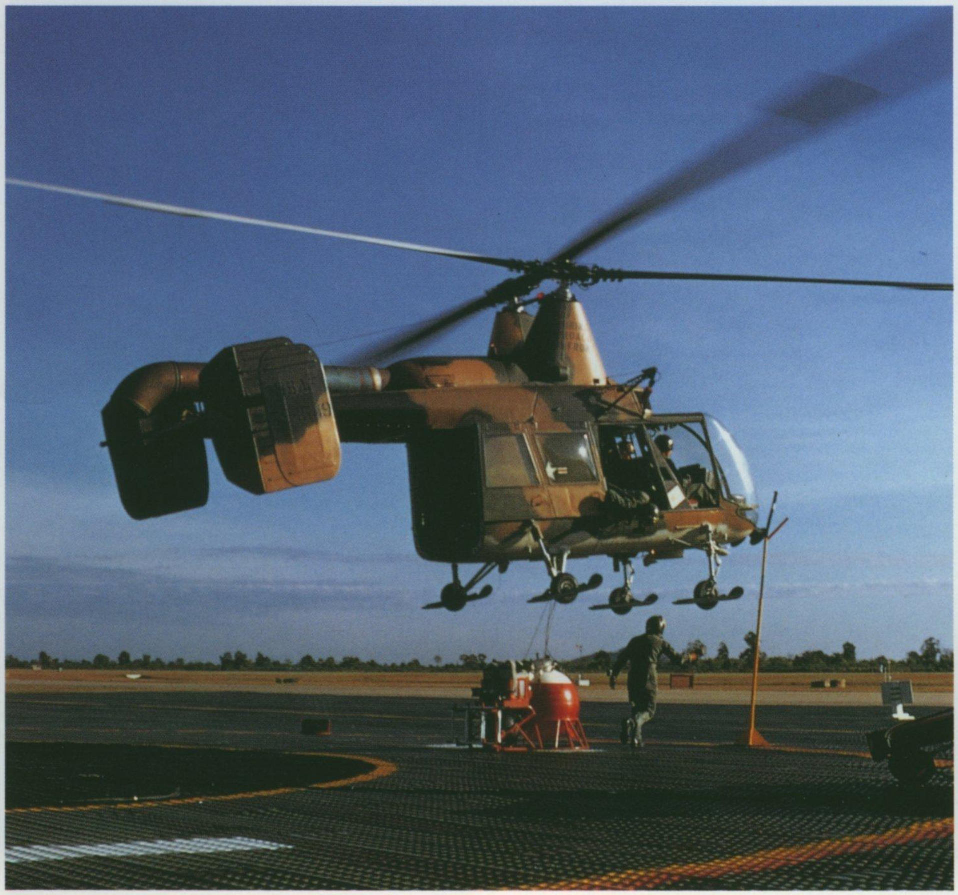
Above Bombs in the foreground, Drut in the background. Perhaps the least-known combat aircraft of the fight up north was the Douglas EF-10B Skyknight (formerly F3D-2) which disrupted North Vietnamese communications and carried out other electronic warfare tasks. It had been a night fighter during the Korean War and was still much respected in 'Nam, even if Marines called it by a nickname which wasn't too complimentary when spelled backwards. Serving with Corps composite squadron VMCJ-1, one of the few squadrons in Navy and Marine Corps aviation without an evocative nickname, this Skyknight is at Da Nang in September 1968. Not long afterwards, its duties were taken over by the Grumman EA-6A Intruder (*Thomas H Idema*)

Preceding pages The last spasm of the on-again, off-again American air campaigns against Hanoi was the 'Christmas bombing' on December 1972, known as *Linebacker II*, when B-52 Stratofortress struck strategic targets in North Vietnam for the first time and, probably, forced Ho Chi Minh's successors to the negotiating table. The Stratofortress was never terribly pretty, and it was not fully effective when employed against guerrillas in rice paddies, but once it was unleashed against North Vietnam it took a heavy toll. B-52D 56-0029 is one of the veterans of the Vietnam fighting (*Robert F Dorr*)



Though not designed for ready survival against the intense defences around Hanoi, the North American OV-10A Bronco flew more than a few FAC (forward air control) missions in more southerly parts of North Vietnam. The Air Force, Navy, and Marines all operated the COIN, or counter-insurgency, OV-10. Ship 115 belongs to the Navy's VAL-4, 'Black Ponies,' at Nha Trang in 1970 (*Peter Dunn*)

Below Arguably the most under-rated aircraft of Vietnam air campaigning was the Kaman HH-43B Huskie, universally known in the combat zone by its radio callsign, Pedro. HH-43B and HH-43F models had been designed for local airbase firefighting and rescue duties but often had to sally forth to make a combat rescue far from home, sometimes in North Vietnam. Aircraft 59-1549 of the 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron is seen at Takhli, Thailand, in about November 1967 (*Edward Renth*)

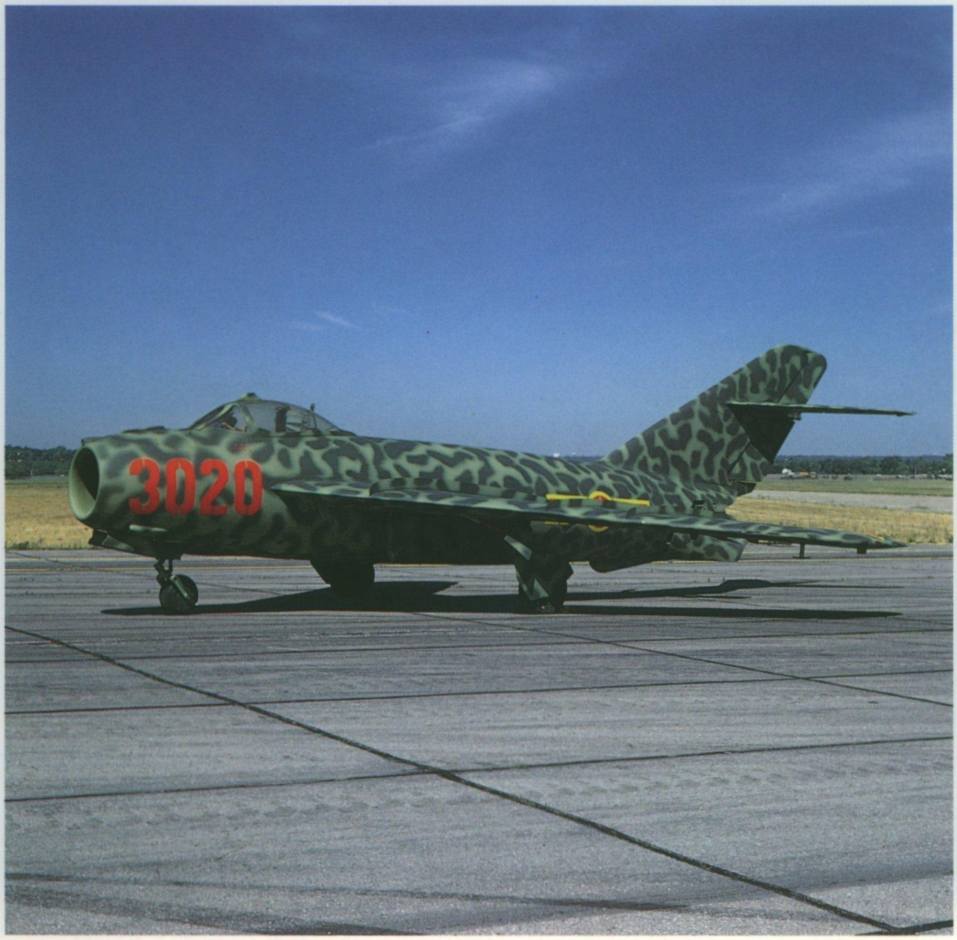


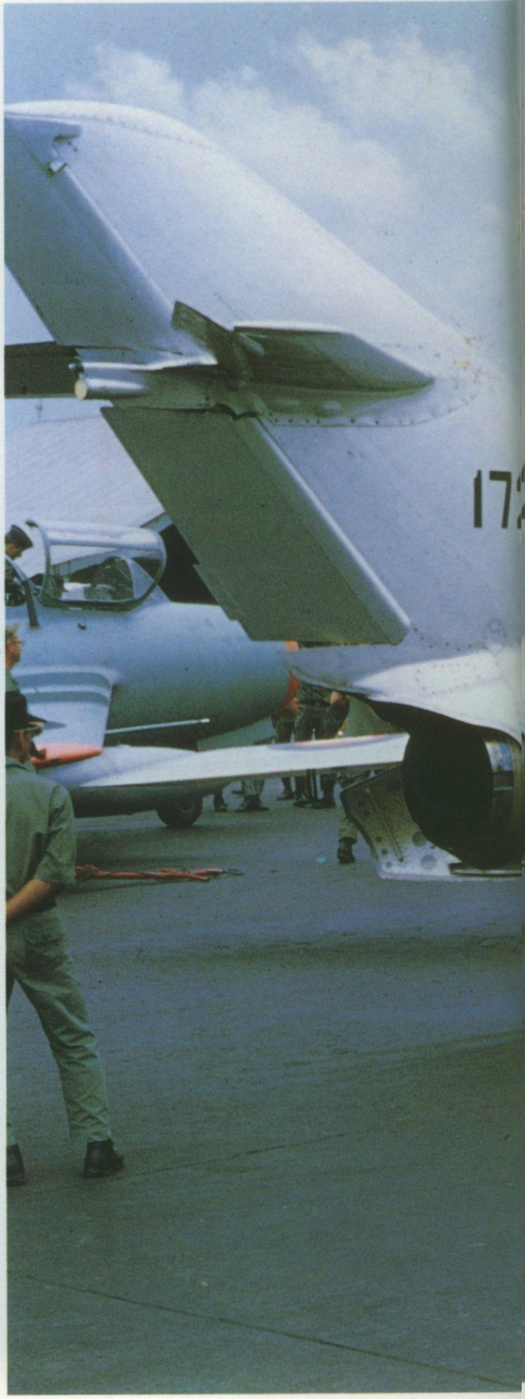
Right In 1965, the Northrop F-5A Freedom Fighter went to South Vietnam with US Air Force pilots who tested the fighter's suitability for a counter-insurgency war. The F-5A, and later the F-5E, equipped Saigon's air force (like this one, seen in December 1970). Designed for export, the Northrop product served valiantly below the 17th Parallel, but it was always clear that the F-5A could not survive against the missiles, MiGs and Triple-A lurking around Hanoi. The F-5A was never employed in any numbers up north (*Cort Durocher*)

Bad Guys

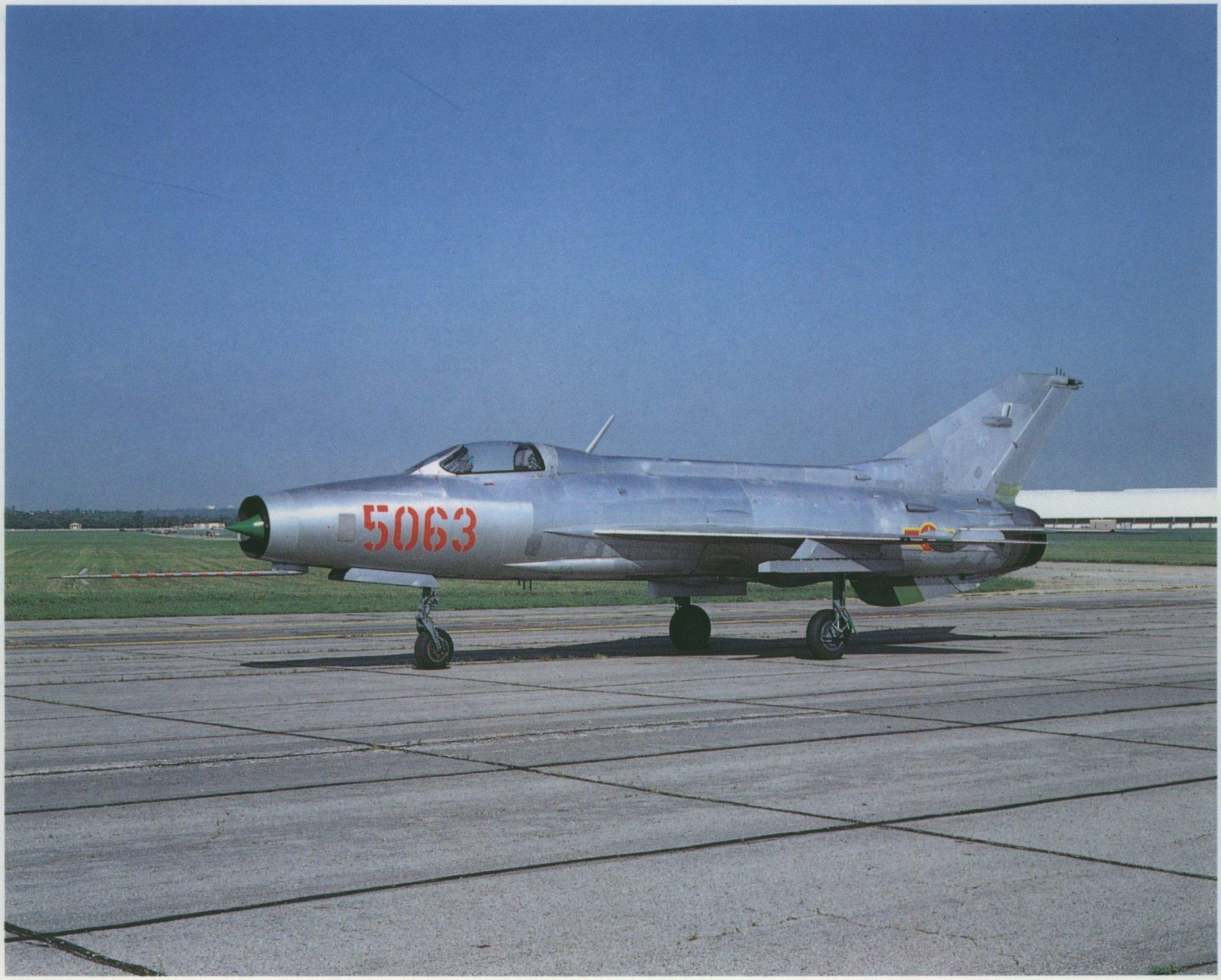
Right Cambodian MiG-17 evaluated by US forces in South Vietnam (*via Robert F Dorr*)

Below When the American build-up started in 1965, Hanoi had a few MiG-15s and MiG-17s. Help from Soviet friends led to Ho Chi Minh's warriors creating a large and formidable tactical air arm with the light, nimble MiG-17s and faster MiG-21s. The camouflage scheme shown here is based on a rigorous effort to reproduce North Vietnam's colours exactly. This MiG-17 is on display at the US Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio (*David W Menard*)





21
CP
CF



On almost no evidence, it is widely reported that the MiG-17 was the favoured mount of North Vietnam's air aces, including the mythical Comrade Tomb who supposedly was slain in battle by US Navy air ace Randy Cunningham. There is, in fact, no information available to the West to indicate which fighter Hanoi's pilots preferred. Neither the MiG-17 nor MiG-21 was ever equipped with a radar-guided missile to fight beyond visual range, so the Americans kept this advantage throughout the war. But when they came up against a MiG-21 like the one shown here, they knew they were facing a Soviet-made warplane which was light, nimble, and fast (*David W Menard*)

MISSION PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE COMBAT ZONE

413
NF
7779
USS HANCOCK
NAVY
302

Combat Aircraft titles from Osprey Aerospace

KORNEA THE AIR WAR

Jack C Nicholls & Warren E Thompson

DOUGLAS A-1 SKYRAIDER

Robert F Dorr

NORTH AMERICAN F-100 SUPER SABRE

David A Anderton

VOUGHT F-8 CRUSADER

Peter Mersky

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